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1;Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

[frontispiece]

SOME COORG GIRLS

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RELIGION AND SOCIETY
AMONG THE
COORGS OF SOUTH INDIA

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[p. i]

RELIGION AND SOCIETY
AMONG THE
COORGS OF SOUTH INDIA

BY

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FOREWORD

114 THE study of religions can be approached in many different ways and can present a number of different kinds of problems. For social anthropologists, or for some of them, one major problem is that of the social function of religion—how does religion contribute to the existence of society as an ordered and continuing system of relationships amongst human beings? It is recognized that religion is a binding force amongst individuals, and it would seem that the etymology of the word indicates this. The scientific problem is how religion does this; how, in other words, it functions. The problem is one of very considerable complexity, and it cannot be said that at present we know very much about this subject. The only method by which we can hope ultimately to arrive at an understanding of it is by a number of analytic descriptive studies of religions of diverse types, so that by systematic comparison it may be possible to arrive at some general theory. This work of Dr. Srinivas is an important contribution to that investigation. It gives us a description and analysis of the religious practices of a people of India, the Coorgs of Coorg.

For the social anthropologist the religion of a people presents itself in the first instance not as a body of doctrine, but as what we may call 'religious' behaviour as a part of social life. Social anthropology is behaviouristic in the sense that we seek to observe how people act as a necessary preliminary to trying to understand how they think and feel. This book, by a trained anthropologist, who is himself an Indian, and who has therefore an understanding of Indian ways of thought which it is difficult for a European to attain even over many years, gives us a scientifically valuable and objective account of the religious behaviour of a particular Indian community.

771 / 182 In an investigation into the social function of religion in a particular society the first thing required is to examine the relation of the religion to the social structure. In this respect the religion of the Coorgs is of very special interest and value. For we may say that there are three different structural systems in which the individual Coorg is involved, and each of these has its own system of religious behaviour and obligations.

596 794 In the first place the Coorg individual is a member of a domestic group, the *okka* or patrilineal joint-family. His closest social ties are with this group and its members, and the well-being of this group is something that is for him of supreme importance. Each such group has its own religious cult. There are daily religious observances of the members of the joint family. There are recurrent occasions on which ritual performances are called for. Any event which affects the solidarity or well-being of the group is an occasion of ritual, such as in births, deaths, and marriages. Piety, for a Coorg, is in the first place the observance of the requirements of this domestic cult.

114 794 182 Dr. Srinivas has described for us the various features of this domestic cult, but he has done more than that. He has helped us to see the social function of these rituals as expressing and maintaining the solidarity and continuity of the structural system. Further, he has sought, with some considerable measure of success, to reveal the meaning of the ritual idiom of the Coorg domestic cult. In any system of ritual each ritual action has its meaning, and the totality of such meanings constitutes the idiom of that system. Just as different societies have different languages so also they have their systems of ritual idiom, and it is the task of the social anthropologist to investigate a system of ritual idiom in the same way that he studies a language. To understand the way a people talk it is necessary to know the idiom of their language; to understand a religion it is necessary to have some understanding of the ritual idiom in which they express their religious sentiments. We do not understand the Coorg domestic cult unless we understand the religious meaning to the Coorgs of the lamp hanging in the hall of the house; and other features of their rites and ceremonies.

621 794 Besides being a member of a joint family (*okka*) the Coorg individual is a member of a village community which includes not only persons of his own caste but also members of other castes. The village community has its own religious cult, with its god or gods and its temple or shrine or temples. The village-deities, when properly propitiated, protect the village and its inhabitants from smallpox and plague and other supernatural evils, and afford blessings such as good health and abundant crops. Thus the cult of the village-deities is a collective action of the community. Just as the domestic cult has for its ostensible aim the preservation of the well-being of the particular group, so the village cult has for its

aim the well-being of the village. Both these cults emphasize for 621
an individual his membership of a particular social group, the 794
joint family in the one instance and the village community in the other.

Three other features of social structure have to be considered in connexion with the village cult. In the first place, though the whole village community takes part in the ceremonies, different caste [564]
groups have different parts to play and are thus differentiated. Some, for example, take part in the animal sacrifice, while others have nothing to do with it. Thus a caste group within the village is able, within the cult, to establish its own unity and its separation from other groups. This is a significant feature of the caste structure of the village.

In the second place, though each village community has its own unity as exhibited in the cult performances, there is co-operation [628]
between different villages, and members of one may take part in the ceremonies of another. Thus the Coorg villages are groups within a single Coorg religious community. It is therefore not only the solidarity of the village that is exhibited in the village cult but also the religious solidarity and unity of the people of Coorg.

Thirdly, there is the fact that the local deities of the villages have 621
been assimilated to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, 794
as when a particular local deity is identified with Shiva or Pārvati. 776
In this way the Coorg religious community has become incorporated as a part of that wider Hindu religious community. The incorporation, however, is only partial. In an orthodox Hindu cult the temple should be served by a Brahmin. Orthodox Hindu deities are vegetarian and dislike alcohol. But some of the Coorg village-deities demand the blood and flesh of animals and offerings of toddy. What Dr. Srinivas calls the process of Sanskritization of the Coorg village cults is therefore very far from being complete. There are very important remains of paganism. This need not surprise us when we remember the many survivals of local paganism in the Christian countries. What is significant is that in his participation in the worship of the village-deities the Coorg individual is able to think of himself as a member of the widespread Hindu religious community.

The individual in Coorg belongs to a particular joint-family, and 564
to a particular village, but in addition he belongs by birth to a particular social group of the kind to which we apply the name

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

56A 'caste'. There are some thousands of such groups in India as a whole. A caste is in its essence a religious group, membership of which entails certain ritual observances. The rules of caste behaviour are rules of religion.

The caste system of India presents a kind of social structure that is of special interest to comparative sociology. There are two major features. The first of these is what we may call 'separatism'. There are important rules which limit the social contact of members of different castes. The rule of endogamy prohibits marriage between members of different castes or sub-castes. There are caste rules as to the persons with whom one may partake of a meal, or from whose hands one may accept food or drink. The second important feature is that there is religious or ritual inequality of castes. Any man born as a Brahmin is holy; he might therefore become a priest and perform the priestly functions even if in actuality he becomes a cook or a water-carrier. At the other, lower, end of the scale are the people now called 'Untouchable'—leather-workers, sweepers, and so on, who are by birth 'unclean' or 'polluted' and with whom contact produces pollution in the members of superior castes. The inequality between persons that is an essential feature of the caste system is a religious or ritual inequality. The caste structure is one of a system of rigid partitions dividing caste from caste. At the same time the totality of all the various separate castes constitutes a single religious community the unity of which is provided by Hinduism as a system of ritual and belief. The social separation of caste from caste is something very different from the social separation of Hindus and Muslims.

114 182 In connexion with the study of the inter-relations of religion and social structure, therefore, the material presented by Dr. Srinivas is of very special interest and value. To define the position of an individual Coorg in the total structural system of the society in which he lives we have, in the first place, to consider him as a member of a particular joint family (*okka*). To this there corresponds, in the field of religious behaviour, his participation in the domestic cult. This cult, with respect to its most general features, may be compared with domestic cults of the kind usually referred to as 'ancestor worship' which are found in many other peoples.

The Coorg individual is also a member of a village community, which is itself part of the Coorg local community, and so part of the wide Hindu community. Religious behaviour in this connexion

is participation in the worship of the gods, who are both local gods 114
and also identified with the gods of the Hindu pantheon. 182

But the Coorg is also a member of one of the hundreds of caste divisions of Hindu social structure. Religious behaviour in this connexion consists of the careful observance of the caste rules, so that ritual pollution is avoided. I believe that Dr. Srinivas intends to give us at some time an account of how the caste structure actually affects the social life within a village, a subject on which, hitherto, we have had no information.

In the kinds of societies with which anthropologists are chiefly concerned a direct relation between religion and social structure is to be discovered in the belief that is held that the due performance of religious rites contributes to the well-being of a group, or to the maintenance of a certain social order. This is seen in Coorg in both the domestic cult which is carried out in order to ensure the well-being of the joint-family, and also in the village cult. In what are sometimes called the higher religions there appears a different feature in the belief in some kind of personal salvation as something to be aimed at by the individual in his observance of religion. Like Christianity and Buddhism, Hinduism in its more philosophical form also holds out to the individual the hope of personal salvation, often conceived as release from the round of reincarnation. The problem of the social function of religious beliefs of this kind is highly complex. It is clear, however, that to examine the social effects of such religions we have to consider them as formulating for the members of a church an ideal of human conduct.

The rich religious life of the Coorgs is compounded of several strands. We can separate these by successively considering the individual as a member of a family group, as a member of a village community, as a worshipper of the deities of the Hindu pantheon, as a member of a particular caste and therefore having his place in the whole widespread caste structure, and finally as being at least influenced by the religious and philosophical system of Hinduism with its formulation of ideals of human conduct. For the student of comparative religion, and particularly for those interested in the sociological study of religion, this book of Dr. Srinivas offers material of exceptional value.

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN

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[p. xi]

PREFACE

122 114 IN 1940 I was awarded, for a period of two years, a research fellowship in sociology by the University of Bombay and this enabled me to do the field-work on which this book is based. I thank the University of Bombay for making it possible for me to study the Coorgs, and I am grateful to Professor G. S. Ghurye for advice and criticism during field-work and subsequent writing.

In June 1942, a few months after returning from Coorg, I was appointed Research Assistant in Sociology in the School of Economics and Sociology in Bombay, and the duties of my new post prevented me from finishing the writing of my field material until the end of 1944. I then came to Oxford, where Professor Radcliffe-Brown's teaching greatly modified my approach to the study of human society. At his suggestion, I started applying some of his ideas regarding the inter-relation of religion and society to the material I had already gathered, and this task proved exciting and, to me, fruitful, even though I was more an ethnologist than a sociologist at the time of my field-work. I am greatly indebted to Professor Radcliffe-Brown for his teaching and for many kindnesses.

I have been greatly helped and stimulated by the teaching and friendship of Professor Evans-Pritchard, who succeeded to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Oxford after Professor Radcliffe-Brown's retirement. I have also benefited from the advice and criticism of Professors M. Fortes and M. Gluckman.

All previous writers on the Coorgs have contributed to my understanding of the social institutions and culture of the Coorgs. I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to them, and especially to Moegling, Richter, N. Chiṇṇappa, and Professor M. B. Emeneau.

Coorg is a beautiful and hospitable country, and I met with kindness everywhere. I should like to thank the people of Coorg generally before mentioning certain individuals who have helped me greatly by giving me hospitality as well as information. I am under a great debt to Shri K. J. Chengappa, who has consistently and patiently supplied me with information over a period of ten years. Shri K. Kāḷappa and Shri P. M. Ponnappa have also given me information and helped me in other ways. I wish to thank

114-122 Shri H. Tirumala Chār, B.A., B.L., and his family for their hospitality to me in Mercara.

I am very grateful to the Carnegie Research Fund for a generous grant which enabled me to pursue my studies at Oxford. I thank Dr. A. A. Baké, and the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, for the loan of some of the photographs reproduced in this book.

My friends Mr. R. G. Lienhardt, Mr. K. O. L. Burridge, and Dr. Kathleen Gough have helped me by critically reading the typescript.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my brother, M. N. Gopal.

M. N. S.

OXFORD
April 1951

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I

INTRODUCTORY

I

COORG is a tiny, mountainous province in south India, 101
bounded on the north and east by Mysore State, and on 131
the west and south by the South Canara and Mālabar
Districts of Madras Presidency. Its greatest length, north to south, is sixty miles, and its greatest breadth, east to west, is forty miles. The total area is 1,593 square miles, of which 519 square miles constitute 'reserve forest'.

The Western Ghat mountains which run along the west coast of 131
India from Gujerat to Cape Comorin pass through Coorg. They 133
generally make a precipitous descent to the west while they slope more gradually to the east. The plateau of peninsular India generally slopes to the east, and most of the bigger south Indian rivers flow from west to east.

The main range of the Western Ghats skirts the southern and western frontier of Coorg. Starting from Brahmagiri Peak (5,276 feet) in the extreme south it runs in a north-westerly direction till Tala Kāvēri, where it turns east for a few miles before it turns north-west again. It proceeds in this direction for some distance and then runs due north till Pushpagiri Peak (5,260 feet).

Spurs strike out in all directions from the main range of the Western Ghats. In the south they form either a ramification of narrow-ridged hills, or subside into undulating slopes enclosing innumerable broad valleys in which rice is grown.

That part of the main range of the Western Ghats which runs east from Tala Kāvēri is called Bēngunāḍ Beṭṭa, and a high spur proceeds eastwards from it at the point it turns abruptly north-west. At Mercara this spur forks, the southern fork ending in the peak of Nūrokkal Beṭṭa, while the northern fork zigzags towards Fraserpēṭ in the east. The Nūrokkal spur continuing the Bēngunāḍ Beṭṭa is important, as, together with the Western Ghats running south-east from Tala Kāvēri, it constitutes the watershed of the upper basin of the Kāvēri river.

The western half of Coorg to the north of Mercara is a plateau

[p. 2]

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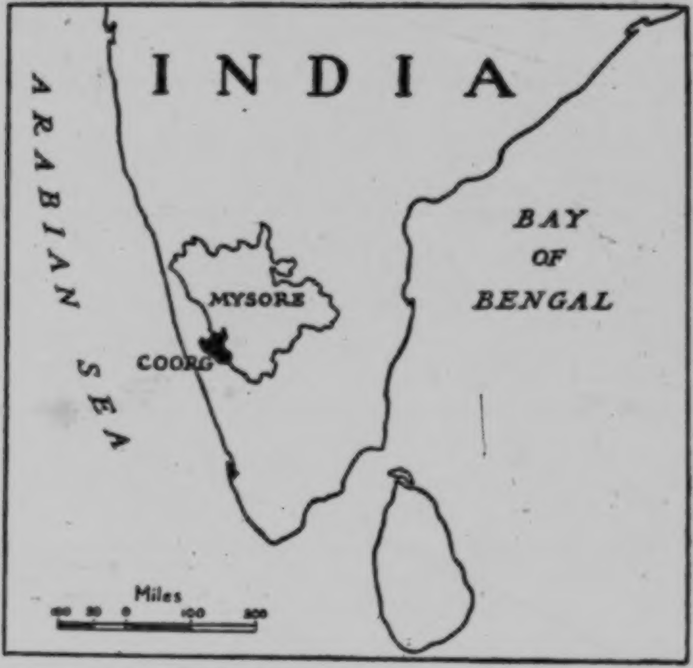
INDIA
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
MYSORE
COORG
Miles
50 0 100 200

1. Map showing the position of Coorg in South India

with an average elevation of 3,500 feet. The plateau extends as far 131
east as Somwārpēṭ, and then slopes towards the River Kāvēri 133
which marks the eastern frontier of Coorg for some distance.

In the extreme north, the Ēḷusāvira hills run from Koḍlipēṭ to the Kāvēri a few miles north of Fraserpēṭ.

Richter gives a good, short description of the general appearance 133
of Coorg, which is worth reproducing here:

> The general appearance of the country varies considerably in the different districts. In the vicinity of Somwārpēṭ, in the north of Coorg, the hills are gently rounded alternating with sloping glades, interspersed with clumps of forest trees, resembling the finest park scenery in Europe. Near Mercara the hills are closer together and more abrupt, and the ravines deeper and more wild. Towards Fraserpēṭ the country assumes the champaign character of the Mysore plateau, with scattered solitary hills. South of Mercara, in the direction of Vīrarājpēṭ, especially in Beppunāḍ, Kaḍiyeṭnāḍ, the country is open, the woods are neither dense nor high, and beautiful grassy downs rise from extensive rice valleys.
>
> The eastern frontier between the Kāvēri and Lakshmaṇatīrtha rivers exhibits an almost uninterrupted and impervious forest . . .[1]

The Kāvēri springs from the Brahmagiri mountain, three miles to the west of Bhāgamaṇḍla. Both the source of the Kāvēri (called Tala Kāvēri or 'Head of the Kāvēri') and Bhāgamaṇḍla, where the Kanaké joins the Kāvēri, are important centres of pilgrimage to Coorgs and other Hindus. The Kāvēri flows first of all east by south to Siddāpur, where it turns north by east and flows for twenty-five miles along the eastern frontier of Coorg to Sirangāla where it diverges into Mysore. A number of tributaries springing from the various mountains of Coorg join the Kāvēri at several points on its course in Coorg. The River Lakshmaṇatīrtha which rises in the Brahmagiri hills to the extreme south of Coorg is an important tributary of the Kāvēri, but joins it in Mysore.

The rivers are generally in full flood during June, July, and 132
August, when the south-west monsoon is at its height. But they fall 133
rapidly afterwards, and in summer they are usually fordable on
foot. They are not navigable, and are little used for irrigation,
which is rendered unnecessary by the copious rainfall and the
multitude of small rivulets rising in the wooded ravines.

The south-west monsoon, lasting from June till September, 132

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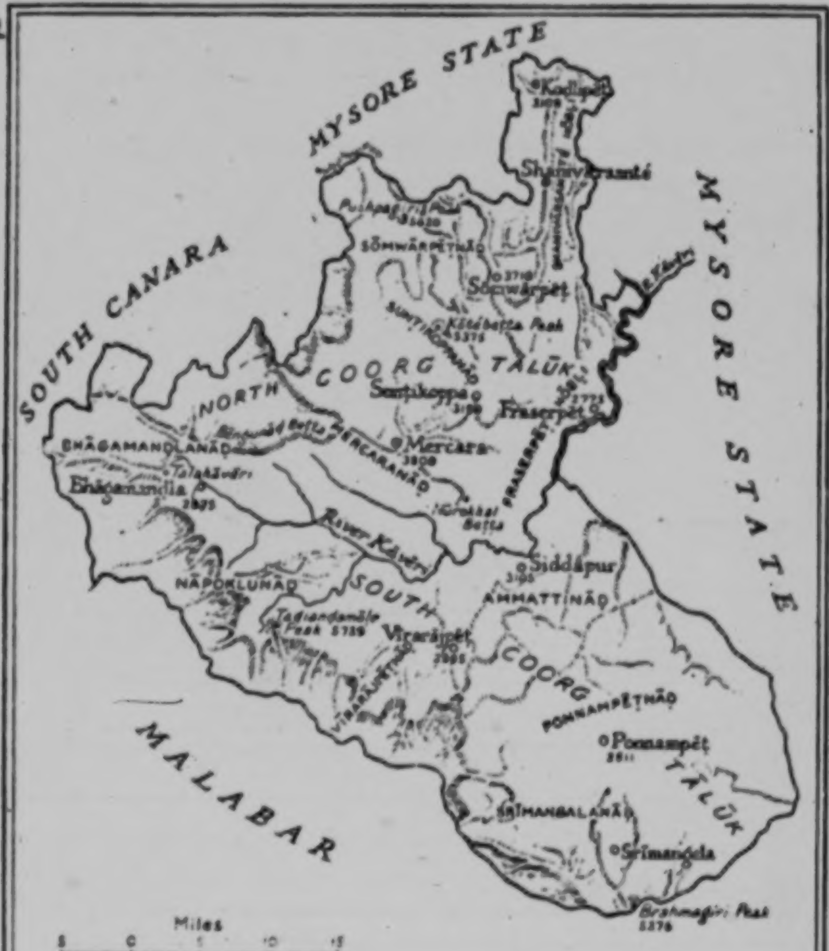
[1] *Manual of Coorg*, Mangalore, 1870, p. 5.


MYSORE STATE
SOUTH CANARA
MYSORE STATE
MALABAR
Kodlipet
3109
Shanivarsanté
Pushpagiri Peak
5620
SŌMWĀRPĒTNĀD
Sōmwārpēt
3710
Kōtebetta Peak
5375
NORTH
COORG TĀLŪK
Santikoppa
3190
Fraserpēt
2773
Mercara
3809
BHĀGAMANDLANĀD
Talakāvēri
Bhāgamandla
2895
MERCARANĀD
River Kāvēri
Siddāpur
3105
AMMATTINĀD
NĀPOKLUNĀD
Tadiandamōle Peak 5729
Virarājpēt
SOUTH
COORG
PONNAMPĒTNĀD
Ponnampēt
2811
TĀLŪK
SRIMANGALANĀD
Srimangala
Brahmagiri Peak
5276
Miles
5
0
5
10
15

2. Map of Coorg

132 brings very heavy rainfall to the Western Ghats generally, and Coorg is no exception to the rule. The monsoon is most severe in July, and thereafter it gradually diminishes till it finally comes to a stop towards the end of September.

The north-east monsoon, lasting from November till January, does not compare with the south-west monsoon in the amount of rain it brings, nor does it affect all parts of Coorg uniformly. Only the eastern and south-eastern parts are markedly affected by it.

Coorg, for its size, shows enormous variation in the amount of rainfall received in different parts, some parts like Voṭékolli receiving as much as 250 inches annually, while others like Fraserpēṭ receive only 41 inches annually. Mercara and Vīrarājpēṭ receive annually 131 and 110 inches respectively. Mercara is the normal seat of the government, but during the monsoon it is replaced by Fraserpēṭ.

The year is divided into three seasons, cold, hot, and rainy. The cold season lasts from December to the beginning of March, the hot from March to the beginning of June, and the rainy from June till the middle of December. September marks the end of the severe south-western monsoon, and November the beginning of the north-eastern monsoon, and in between the two there is an uncertain respite from rain.

The climate of Coorg shows regional variation, the eastern and northern parts resembling the climate of Mysore, while Coorg Proper[1] is damper and cooler than Mysore. In Mercara the average temperature for the year is 66·6°. In the monsoon the daily mean temperature is 65° with a daily variation of 15°, while in winter the same daily mean temperature has a greater range of daily variation with 24°, and in the hot season the daily mean temperature of 70° has a variation of 25°. The lowest temperature in winter is 50°, while the maximum reached in summer is 82°. Mercara, however, is a little cooler than the rest of Coorg owing to its comparatively high elevation (3,809 feet).

137 The flora of Coorg does not vary much from the flora of the rest of south India. Very dense forests, containing useful timbers, clothe the sides of the mountains everywhere. In the east the more level tracts are covered with clumps of bamboo interspersed with other trees, some of them timbers. The precious sandalwood tree also grows in this area.

[1] See p.7 for the meaning of 'Coorg Proper'.

137 The cardamom grows in the deep and damp recesses of the evergreen forests on the Western Ghats. Many varieties of beautiful ferns and the useful rattan cane creeper and *vōṭé* reeds are also found close to the mountain streams flowing in these forests.

136 Coorg fauna is the same as that of the rest of south India. In its forests are found elephant, tiger, bison, panther, boar, bear, porcupine, deer, and wild dog and jackal. The extensive clearing of the mountain-sides for coffee and orange plantations, the general love of hunting, and the possession of firearms have resulted in the decimation of wild life in Coorg.

II

131 484 The isolation and inaccessibility of Coorg, with its steep mountains, dense forests, and heavy rainfall, contributed to the maintenance and elaboration of the distinctive mode of life and culture of Coorgs. The Lingāyaṭ Rājaṣ, who saw certain political and military advantages in the natural isolation of Coorg, tried to increase it. Richter tells us that they closed down certain roads leading to Mercara, and prohibited travelling by them.[1]

But under British rule the existing roads were improved and new ones were built. Nowadays buses run regularly on all the main roads connecting different parts of Coorg with each other, and Coorg with her neighbours. Yet even now no railway line passes through Coorg and this restricts the amount of contact it has with the rest of India.

The isolation of Coorg in the past was far from absolute. Contact always did exist with neighbours, though such contact was limited and difficult. For instance, Coorgs in south-west Coorg went annually in caravans to Malabar to sell their surplus rice, and to buy jaggery,[2] coconuts, coconut oil, tobacco, and areca-nuts. Coorgs in south-east Coorg bought cattle in Mysore and went on pilgrimages to certain shrines like the Shrikanṭēshwara Temple in Nanjanagūḍ. Coorgs in central and north Coorg went on pilgrimages to the Subrahmaṇya Temple in South Canara.

184 Though Coorg is a very small country, it shows considerable cultural diversity. The areas to the north and east of Mercara, and

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[1] Op. cit., p. 426.

[257] [2] Crude brown sugar, either in the form of square blocks or small round cakes, made from sugar-cane juice or the saps of various palms.

the entire eastern fringe of Coorg have many cultural features in 184
common with Mysore. The areas to the west of Bhāgamanḍla, and the north-western parts, have many cultural forms in common with South Canara, while the south-western fringe has many features in common with Malabar.

The quadrilateral formed by Mercara in the north, Siddāpur in 101
the east, Śrīmangala in the south, and Bhāgamanḍla in the west has 131
been called Coorg Proper by earlier writers. Coorg Proper is an area of greater homogeneity within Coorg, and formerly the bulk of Coorgs lived there. This area might be described as the core and centre of the culture of Coorgs.

When we speak of Mysore (or Kannaḍa) culture, or Malabar (or Malayāḷam) culture, or South Canara (or Tuḷu) culture, we are not thinking of entities unrelated to each other. Malayāḷam and Tuḷu cultures have certain features in common and, similarly, Tuḷu and Kannaḍa. Again, all three share some features. In fact, the whole of India constitutes, in a very broad sense, a single culture-area within which each linguistic area constitutes a region of greater cultural homogeneity. The recognition of the greater homogeneity of each linguistic area should not lead to the ignoring of the larger unity, and still less should it ignore the special connexions with some or all of the neighbouring areas.

A village in the Kannaḍa, Telugu, or Tamil country is a group 361
of houses and huts huddled together in a confined space with fields and gardens stretching all round. But a different type of village prevails in Coorg Proper where Coorgs predominate: every Coorg house is built on its ancestral estate, and near it live the servants of the house, usually men of low caste, in huts of mud and bamboo with thatched roofs. On the other side of the hill or valley lives another Coorg joint family with its satellite families living close by. A few such houses and their dependent huts scattered over the hills and valleys are lumped together and called a village (*ūr*). An eastern plainsman used to seeing villages as close physical entities would be tempted at first to assert that there are no villages in Coorg Proper. Such a view, however, would be wrong. A village in Coorg Proper is real in the sense that its boundaries are known to elders, and the people of the village see themselves as a unity against other villages.

The members of a village have to co-operate on certain occasions 621
such as weddings, funerals, festivals of the village-deity, harvest

621 festival, hunts, dances, and thatching a newly built house. Rivalry between villages is still prevalent, and formerly feuds (*maradalé*) between villages were frequent.

162 Most people in Coorg live in villages, either themselves cultivating or supervising the cultivation of land. Exact figures are available only for 1931 when sixty out of every thousand lived in towns, while the rest lived in villages: i.e. 94 per cent. of the population lived in villages.[1] Even now, excepting educated men in government service, or in one of the learned professions, and a few commercial men, others in general prefer to live in their natal villages on account of their close attachment to their ancestral lands.

[361] There are only two towns in Coorg, Mercara, the capital, with a population of 7,112, and Vīrarājpēṭ, with 4,106.

The 1941 Census mentions the total population of Coorg as 168,726, but it does not enlighten us as to the composition of this population. The details are, however, available for 1931 when the total population was 163,327, and of this, 146,007 were Hindus, 13,777 Muslims, 3,425 Christians, and the balance of 118 was accounted for by Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis. Coorgs, with a strength of 41,026, formed the largest single group amongst the Hindus.[2]

III

197 All the important languages spoken in Coorg are Dravidian, with the exception of Hindusthāni and English. Again, detailed figures are available only for 1931 when 62,769 spoke Kannaḍa, 44,585 Koḍagi, the dialect of Coorgs, 14,914 Malayāḷam, 14,275 Tuḷu, and 10,026 Yerava, the dialect of the Yerava tribe. There were 3,007 Tamil-speakers, fewer in fact than the speakers of the Indo-Aryan language, Hindusthāni, who numbered 4,378.[3]

Professor M. B. Emeneau considers that 'the Dravidian language spoken by Coorgs is an independent language, and shows characteristics that in part connect it closely with Kannaḍa, in part with the languages of the Malabar coast, especially Malayāḷam'.[4]

[212] Coorgs make use of the Kannaḍa script on those occasions when they wish to reduce Koḍagi into writing. Such occasions are not,

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[1] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. xiii, p. 7.

[2] Ibid., pp. 41–42.

[3] Ibid., p. 38.

[4] In a letter to the author.

however, very common. Kannaḍa was the court and official language of Coorg under the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, and nowadays it is the medium of instruction in schools. Besides, every Coorg is able to speak it. 197

Educated Coorgs are usually trilingual, knowing Koḍagi, Kannaḍa, and English. Koḍagi is used in the home, Kannaḍa in talking to most non-Coorgs excepting Malayāḷīs, and English in official matters, and occasionally in conversation with strangers. English is popular with Coorgs, and even women, especially those under thirty, have some acquaintance with it. 191

In 1931 there were 44,585 Koḍagi-speakers though the total number of Coorgs was only 41,026. This discrepancy is due to the fact that several castes and tribes have taken over the language of Coorgs, who have throughout been the dominant group in Coorg. In fact, only a few castes have escaped the temptation to imitate Coorgs in dress, customs, and manners. In the past some families of Wynāḍ Cheṭṭis, Kannaḍa Okkaligas, Tuḷu Gauḍas, and others did succeed in entering the Coorg fold. Even now some non-Coorgs aspire to be Coorgs. For instance, during the 1931 Census, a number of Kannaḍa Okkaligas and Tuḷu Gauḍas in north Coorg succeeded in getting themselves enumerated as Coorgs as they had been described as 'Jamma Koḍagas' in the title-deeds conferring on them the right to hold land under the concession tenure of *jamma* (see pp. 16–17). The enumerators, in spite of their strict instructions to check all doubtful cases thoroughly, had to enumerate such persons as Coorgs. It is presumed, however, that their number did not exceed a thousand.[1] 197 162

IV

Coorg enters history in the ninth century A.D., but the information we possess at present about the period between the ninth and seventeenth centuries is very little indeed. We do know, however, that ever since the period for which we have any information, the fortunes of the powerful south Indian Kingdoms in the east have had effects on Coorg. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Changāḷvas, who ruled some parts of Coorg, were feudatory to the Gangas of Talkāḍ in Mysore. The Changāḷvas (Kings of Changanāḍ) ruled certain areas to the west of Mysore city and the eastern 175

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[1] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. xiii, p. 42.

175 and northern parts of Coorg excluding Ēḷusāvirashīmé Hōbḷi, at present called Shanivārasanté Hōbḷi. This latter area was part of the territory ruled by the Kongāḷva Kings in the eleventh century. Both the Changāḷvas and Kongāḷvas were Jains by faith, and Changāḷva inscriptions have been found in Yeḍavanāḍ in the north and Beṭṭyetnāḍ in the south (see Map 3). It is probable that their territory included Tala Kāvēri as well.

The Chōḷas of the Tamil country defeated the Gangas in the beginning of the eleventh century, and they claim to have conquered Coorg as well. Both the Changāḷvas and Kongāḷvas now became feudatory to the Chōḷas.

The Hoysaḷas, a dynasty which rose to power in western Mysore after the fall of the Gangas, succeeded in the twelfth century in driving the Chōḷas out of Mysore. The Changāḷvas, who had accepted the overlordship of both the Gangas and Chōḷas, refused to accept the overlordship of the Hoysaḷas and claimed independence. Several battles took place between the two before the Hoysaḷas were able to establish their authority. These battles are important for us, for the first reference to Coorgs as a body occurs in an inscription referring to one of them. We find Coorgs fighting for their Changāḷva ruler against the invader from Mysore.

In 1145 the Hoysaḷa king Narasimha I slew the Changāḷva ruler in battle and captured his elephants, horses, gold, and jewels. Thereafter the Changāḷvas appear to have withdrawn into Coorg, for in 1174 Ballāḷa II sent his general Beṭṭarasa against them in Pālparé in Hattugaṭṭanāḍ in Kiggaṭnāḍ (see Map 3). Beṭṭarasa was victorious, and he built a town at Pālparé which he made his capital. But Pemma-Vīrappa, joined by Budigondéya Nandidēva, Udiyāditya of Kurchi (village), and others, 'the Koḍagas of all the *nāḍs*', marched against Pālparé and attacked Beṭṭarasa, who seems [101] to have got the worst of it at first, but was finally victorious. This is the earliest reference to Coorgs by name.[1]

The defeated Changāḷvas seem to have accepted the suzerainty of the Hoysaḷas. In 1252 the Hoysaḷa king Somēshwara visited them at Rāmanāthapura, when the Changāḷva capital was at Shrīrangapaṭṇa, south of the Kāvēri near Siddāpur. The Changāḷvas had now changed their faith from Jainism to Lingayāṭism, a popular sect devoted exclusively to the worship of Shiva, which arose in the Kannaḍa country in the twelfth century A.D.

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[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, new edition, Oxford, 1908, vol. xi, p. 10.

When the Vijayanagar kingdom replaced the Hoysaḷas in the fourteenth century the Changāḷvas became feudatory to them. The Vijayanagar kingdom, extending over a great part of south India, remained in power till 1565 when it was defeated by the Muslims at the Battle of Tāḷikoṭa.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Vijayanagar kings had bestowed on, or confirmed to, vassal chiefs bearing various titles, sundry tracts in Mysore, on the condition of paying tribute and rendering military service. Those in the north were controlled direct from the capital. The southern chiefs were under a viceroy, termed the Śrī Ranga Rāyal at Seringapaṭam. After the disaster of Tāḷikōṭa, although nominal allegiance continued to be paid to the viceroy, such of the chiefs as had the power gradually declared their independence.[1]

Among the chiefs who became independent were the Nāyakas of Bēḍnūr, the Changāḷvas who ruled over a good part of Coorg, and the Woḍeyars of Mysore. The last-mentioned of these rose to power after the fall of Vijayanagar, absorbing many of its former dependencies.

The authority of the viceroy seems to have been recognized in a shadowy way even after the fall of Vijayanagar until 1610 when Mysore captured Seringapaṭam, the seat of the viceroy's government. The Changāḷvas seem to have been friends with the viceroy who, in 1607, confirmed the Maḷalavāḍi country[2] to Piriyarāja (or Rudragaṇa), the Changāḷva king of the Nanjarājapaṭṇa branch.

A clear account of the history of the Changāḷva kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is not yet available. It is known, however, that in the beginning of the sixteenth century Nanjarāja founded their capital of Nanjarājapaṭṇa. In 1589 Piriya Rāja (Rudragaṇa) rebuilt Singapaṭṇa and named it after himself, Piriyāpaṭṇa. A branch of the Changāḷvas seem to have ruled in Piriyāpaṭṇa in the seventeenth century. The exact date when this dynasty came to an end is not certain as, according to the existing account, the last Rāja was killed in 1644 while fighting Mysoreans. According to the same account Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II) was

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. xviii, p. 176.

[2] He did this because the deity Annadāni Mallikārjuna on the Beṭṭadapura hill in Huṇsūr tālūk (or Maḷalavāḍi) was the family deity of the Changāḷvas of the Nanjarājapaṭṇa branch, and the viceroy wanted the worship of the deity to continue as long as this branch of the Changāḷvas continued to exist. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. xi, p. 11.

175 reigning in Coorg at this time, but we know for certain that he did not ascend the throne till 1686, forty-two years after 1644.

Firishta, the historian of Akbar and Jahāngir, states that at the end of the sixteenth century Coorg Proper was ruled by its chiefs or Nāyakas, who acknowledged the supremacy of Vijayanagar, but constantly fought among themselves.[1] The chaotic situation was taken advantage of by a prince of the neighbouring Ikkēri or Bēḍnūr dynasty, who at first settled in Hālēri, north of Mercara, as a Jangama or Lingāyaṭ priest, and succeeded in gradually bringing the entire country under his control.

The Nāyakas of Bēḍnūr, the Rulers of Piriyāpaṭṇa, and the Rājas of Coorg were all related to each other. It is even possible that the Rājas of Coorg were thought of as in some way dependent upon the Nāyakas of Bēḍnūr: this would help to explain Haider Ali's regarding himself as liege lord of Coorg when he had conquered Bēḍnūr in 1763.

The prince of the Bēḍnūr dynasty who settled down as a *jangama* or Lingāyaṭ priest in Hālēri in north Coorg was an astute strategist. He was well aware of the fact that a *jangama* commanded a great deal of respect from Lingāyaṭs who predominated in north Coorg. He lived in a village council house (*chāvaḍi*), teaching children and preaching to adults. People voluntarily gave him uncleaned paddy (*dhūḷi bhatta*) at harvest. Later, when he was certain of his hold over the people, he changed the voluntary contribution to a compulsory levy of one and a half *bhaṭṭis* (*bhaṭṭi* = 80 *seers*) of rice, and a sum of nine annas and eight pies per house per annum. He also called upon his followers to guard his dwelling in turns. The watchmen were called *chāvaḍikāras* or 'men of the *chāvaḍi*', a name which was later used for the Rāja's troops. The priest-politician next declared himself ruler of Hālēri and surrounding *nāḍs*, and the chiefs ruling over small areas of Coorg Proper submitted to his authority on condition that he allowed them to keep to themselves three-quarters of the revenue collected by them from their subjects, and pay only a fourth to him as their overlord. The Rāja's authority continued to increase. The troublesome chiefs were gradually eliminated, and only those who did not constitute a threat to his authority were allowed to survive. But their capacity for mischief had not entirely been destroyed, as will be seen later.

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[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. xi, p. 11. 'Nāyaka' in Kannaḍa means 'leader', and it seems to have been a title assumed by anybody with a following.

Muddu Rāja (1633–86), the grandson of the founder of the dynasty of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, moved the capital from Hālēri to Mercara in 1681, and this continues to be the capital today. It is not certain whether it was Muddu Rāja or his son Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II) who reorganized the administration, altering the existing *nāḍ*[1] boundaries and creating a clear hierarchy of headmen (*takkas*), and four appellate courts (*paṭṭis*) for the settlement of disputes.

The consolidation of the authority of the Rājas which began with the founder was completed only during the time of his great grandson Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II). During the latter's reign we hear of the efforts of Uttu Nāyaka, a chieftain in Armēri in Beppunāḍ, to get the country invaded from the south by Kōṭangaḍi Vīra Varma while Vīra Rāja II was defending the country from the Mysoreans in the east. Vīra Rāja II was luckily able to beat off both the eastern and southern invaders.

The struggle between Mysore and Coorg which began during the time of the Hoysaḷas and continued till the end of the reign of Vīra Rāja II assumed a particularly severe form in the latter half of the eighteenth century, after the usurpation of the Mysore throne by Haider Ali. The severity reached its climax during the reign of Tippu Sultan, Haider's son, and only ended with his death in 1799. Coorgs fought repeatedly for their king and country against the invaders, paying a heavy price for their loyalty.

Haider conquered Bēḍnūr in 1763, and he seems to have thought that this entitled him to suzerainty over Coorg, a claim which he tried to assert by force as well as cunning. In the complicated struggle between him and the Rājas of Coorg, he does not seem to have made any considerable progress so long as the question of succession to the Coorg throne was clear and undisputed.

But the death in 1770 of Muddu Rāja II and Muddayya Rāja, who were both jointly ruling Coorg as representatives of the different segments of the dynasty of Lingāyaṭ Rājas, gave rise to succession disputes between Linga Rāja I, younger brother of Muddu Rāja II, and Dēvappa Rāja, son of Muddayya Rāja. Dēvappa Rāja was successful in the struggle, and the unsuccessful Linga Rāja I sought the help of Haider, who was eagerly waiting for such an opportunity. Haider helped Linga Rāja I to ascend the Mercara throne, and after the latter's death in 1780 he assumed

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[1] Coorg was traditionally divided into thirty-five *nāḍs*, each *nāḍ* containing several villages.

175 entire possession of Coorg, under the pretence of being guardian of the dead king's sons till they came of age. Meanwhile the sons were made to reside at the Gōrūr fort. A Muslim garrison was stationed at Mercara, the capital, and a former official of the Rāja was appointed governor.

These measures were extremely unpopular with Coorgs who rose in rebellion in 1782 and drove out the Muslim garrison at Mercara. They escaped Haider's retaliation as he was just then busy fighting the English in the south, and died soon after. In 1784 Tippu Sultan, Haider's son, marched through Coorg on his way from Mangalore to Seringapaṭam and threatened Coorgs that he would make an example of them if they rebelled again. Coorgs replied to this by open insurrection in 1785, and a force sent to put them down was driven back. Thereupon Tippu himself marched into Coorg with an army and,

> having lured most of the Coorgs to meet him at Tala Kāvērī, under the pretence of peaceable intentions and conciliatory measures, he suddenly seized them, and hunting out their families, drove them, altogether about 70,000 souls, like a herd of cattle to Seringapaṭam, where all the males were forcibly circumcised. Coorg itself was partitioned among Musalman Landlords, to whom the slaves of the country were made over, and additional labour provided from Ādoni in Beḷḷāry District. The only condition laid on the new owners was that they were to search out and slay all such Coorgs as might have escaped his vengeance, as he was resolved on their extermination. The country was held by garrisons in four forts, at Mercara (Jāffarābād), Fraserpēṭ (Kushālnagar), Bhāgamaṇḍla and Beppunāḍ; and on account of the accessions he had made to the faith Tippu now assumed the title of Bādshāh [king].[1]

The Coorg princes who had been removed from Gōrūr to Piriyāpaṭṇa by Tippu Sultan managed to escape to Coorg in 1788, after six years' confinement, and at once Coorgs rallied round their princes. Before long, Vīra Rāja IV, the eldest of the princes, occupied the entire country. Tippu sent a large force to reoccupy Coorg but this had to be diverted to the west coast at the eleventh hour to subdue a revolt in Malabar.

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[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. xi, p. 13. The slaves referred to above were the Poleya servants of Coorgs and other high-caste masters. The number of Coorgs who were driven out of Coorg into Seringapaṭam by Tippu is variously estimated. Lewis Rice, for instance, estimates it at 85,000 in *Mysore and Coorg*, vol. iii, Bangalore, 1878, p. 111. Shri N. Chiṇṇappa estimates it at 110,000, *Paṭṭōlē Paḷumē*, p. 45.

From 1788 till the defeat and death of Tippu in 1799, Vīra Rāja IV helped the English in their wars against Mysore. Richter tells us that in 1792 when Lord Cornwallis had driven Tippu into Seringapaṭam and the British occupied that island, 'about 5,000 Coorgs who had been carried away by Tippu, with their wives and children, altogether about 12,000 souls, made their escape in the confusion that ensued and returned to their native country'.[1] Their old homes and lands were restored to the returning exiles, and they seem to have been accepted back into the Coorg fold without difficulty. 175

Vīra Rāja ruled till 1809 when he died, leaving behind only daughters. This gave rise to the inevitable succession disputes in which, in the end, Linga Rāja II, younger brother of the dead king, emerged triumphant in 1811. He ruled till his death in 1820 when he was succeeded by his twenty-year-old son Chikka Vīra Rāja (Vīra Rāja V). The latter was an incompetent and sensuous tyrant, and in 1834 he was deposed by the British who annexed Coorg. The rule of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas had come to an end.

V

Lewis Rice tells us that Coorgs formed the bulk of the armies of the Rājas.[2] He writes, 181 726

> these mountaineers (Coorgs) had a considerable share of intrepidity and perseverance; stratagem entered largely into their system of tactics, in war they were remarkable for their predatory habits, and their neighbours accused them on those occasions of adding cruelty to pillage. Like the modern guerilla, though they were unable to contend openly with regular troops, they intercepted their supplies, cut off their communications, and harassed them by surprises, a species of warfare admirably adapted to second the natural difficulties that a hilly country must present. An intimate knowledge of it, a strict obedience, and a singular devotion to their chief [i.e. Rāja] accompanied by a remarkable attachment to their wilds and an equal gallantry in defending them, may in some measure perhaps have compensated the want of military skill.[3]

The system of land tenure prevalent in Coorg directly contributed to the maintenance and development of the military tradition of Coorgs. Land revenue was the principal source of the wealth of the Rājas. The assessment was based on a survey and 423 701

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[1] Op. cit., vol. iii, p. 327.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Op. cit., p. 326.

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A SMALL HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

RICE-FIELD AFTER HARVEST

[Facing p. 16]

701 423 classification of all cultivated land in Coorg. In 1812, during the reign of Linga Rāja II, a general settlement was made and this was recorded in a book called *Hukum Nāma*. All cultivated land was divided into farms (*vargas*), and every farm was entered in the register along with the type of tenure it was held under.

The *jamma* system of land tenure under which most Coorgs held (and even now hold) land was the basis of their military tradition. It was an hereditary right passing from father to son, and was for this reason called *jamma*, a corruption of the Sanskrit *janma* which means 'birth'. It was not, however, confined to Coorgs. Kannaḍa Okkaligas, Tuḷu Gaudas, smiths (Airis), potters (Kumbāras), and Māpiḷḷa immigrants from Malabar enjoyed the privilege and prestige of holding land on *jamma* tenure. The Rājas occasionally offered *jamma* tenure as a bait both to induce certain artisan and trading castes from outside to settle down in Coorg and to induce local people to reclaim forest or waste land.

The *jamma* tenure was a very light one in terms of money, being only five rupees or a hundred *bhaṭṭis* of wet land. A hundred *bhaṭṭis* of wet land means an area of land producing a hundred *bhaṭṭis* of paddy. The area of land required to produce that amount varies according to the fertility of the soil, and arable land is classified into seven grades for purposes of assessment.

Along with the assesssed rice-field went two unassessed stretches of land: one was *bāṇé*, the highland adjacent to the rice-field and clothed with jungle from which the cultivator's joint family obtained its supply of fuel, timber, and forest produce; and the other was *bariké*, low-lying pasturage for the cultivator's cattle.

Legally, *jamma* land was impartible, inalienable, and could not be sublet without the permission of the Rāja, and, most important of all, people holding land on the *jamma* tenure were liable to be called up for military service. Richter writes in 1870 that 'the *jamma* ryots [cultivators] are still liable to be called out to repel outward aggression or quell internal disturbances, and to furnish all police- and treasure-guards, escorts, &c., in time of peace'.[1]

Every family holding *jamma* land had to perform guard duties for fifteen days in the year, during which time the guards were maintained at public expense though not paid. Not all the men of a joint family were employed on guard duties at the same time.

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[1] Op. cit., p. 402.

701 Some were left free to look after land, and even those who were
423 posted on guard duties were posted near their fields.

Jamma tenure conferred a double prestige on the holder in
423 addition to the undoubted economic advantage. It signified that
554 the holder had his roots in Coorg, and the duty of rendering
military service to the state in times of emergency conferred on
him the second type of prestige. The other important tenure in
Coorg was *sāgu*, in which not only was land assessed at ten rupees
per hundred *bhaṭṭis* of land, being twice the rate for *jamma* land,
but also the holder was liable to render every type of service to the
state except military service. During Richter's time, but for forty
Coorgs, all the people holding land on *sāgu* tenure were non-Coorgs.[1]

The Rājas occasionally granted land on *jamma* tenure to non-Coorgs as a special mark of favour. Occasionally, Coorgs who held land on *jamma* tenure were transferred to the *sāgu* class as punishment for wrongs done by them.

VI

175 During the two centuries of rule by the Rājas, Coorg underwent
[631] a number of changes, political, administrative, and social. The
authority of the local chieftains or Nāyakas was destroyed and the
administration was centralized. The Rājas established a postal
[423] service (*anché*) for the use of officials only. Land was surveyed
thoroughly, and the type of tenure under which each farm was held
[671] was recorded in the *Hukum Nāma* of Linga Rāja II (1811–20). The
Hukum Nāma also contained a few paragraphs dealing with the
powers of officials to try cases, civil and criminal, without reference
to the Rāja. Serious offences like adultery, murder, and treason
[622] were tried by the Rāja himself. The recognition of the authority of
the headman of a village and his council of elders was a general
[623] feature of the administrative system of the Rājas. They also
recognized the authority of caste elders to try and settle caste
disputes.

[186] The long and bitter struggle with Haider and Tippu increased
the sense of national identity of the inhabitants of Coorg. Coorgs
played an important part in this struggle as they formed the bulk
of the Rājas' soldiery, and also because they were specially selected
for barbarous treatment by Tippu Sultan.

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[1] Op. cit., p. 406.

175 The Rājas were Kannaḍigas and under their rule the importance
795 of Kannaḍa culture increased in Coorg at the expense of Mala-
184 yāḷam. They were also Lingāyaṭs, who are staunch vegetarians and teetotallers, and possess a powerful and highly organized church of their own. Fifty-seven Lingāyaṭ *maṭhas* or monasteries, some of them heavily endowed, existed in north Coorg during Richter's time.[1]

The religion of the Rājas left its mark on the general population, and especially on Coorgs. The latter constituted the aristocracy under the Rājas, and a number of them held important posts at the Rājas' courts. Members of the royal family occasionally married Coorgs. The close contact which Coorgs enjoyed with the Rājas certainly helped in the spread of the culture and religion of the latter.

[302] Many Coorgs even today adorn their foreheads with three horizontal, finger-wide, stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes, a mark
[533] used by devotees of Shiva in all parts of India. Coorg folksongs frequently refer to a man or woman praying to Shiva soon after getting up in the morning. Most of the important temples visited by Coorgs are Shaivite in character.

VII

648 The annexation of Coorg by the British in 1834 marks the
178 beginning of the operation of vast political, economic, social, and
423 ideological forces on the people of that tiny province. For instance, the British gave *jagirs* or assessment-free lands to those Coorgs who had helped them in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837, and later these were allowed to be treated as gifts to the individuals concerned and not to their joint families. Traditionally, the joint family was the unit which owned land, and individuals owned only a little cash and a few movables. But by 1870, less than forty years after the annexation of Coorg by the British, some individual Coorgs had acquired for themselves farms and coffee plantations.
648 Richter applauds the change:
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> . . . these individual enterprises seem to be the natural transition to an impending general social reform—the breaking up of the great houses, and the independent establishment of each married couple residing near their own paddy-fields, and eating the fruit of their own labour. The

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[1] Op. cit., pp. 175-6.

indolent will then have to work for subsistence or sink into misery, 648
the industrious and thrifty will prosper and after a period of no little 178
angry strife a happier life of personal freedom and domestic felicity will be the inheritance of future generations.[1]

One of the first reforms introduced by the British was the 648
abolition of slavery. Every high-caste landholder had apportioned 567
to him, from ancient times, one or more families of slaves according 245
to the size of his estate. These slaves belonged to a very low caste 178
like the Poleyas. The legal abolition of slavery did not, however, materially affect the landholders, many of whom were Coorgs. But when, in the fifties of the last century, coffee plantations were opened up all over Coorg and there was a sudden demand for coolie labour, many of the slaves deserted their former masters to work for cash wages on the plantations. It was only then that the condition requiring a person holding land on the *jamma* tenure not to sublet his land was relaxed to the extent of permitting him to sublet a fourth of his estate.

Before the coming of coffee, rice was not only the staple crop, [243]
but also the chief commercial crop, as not many people owned the evergreen forests where cardamom throve. The cultivation of rice was the most important concern of every landholding joint family and its slave-families. Excess of rice was disposed of in Malabar where articles not available in Coorg were bought.

As a food crop rice has an intrinsic importance which no purely commercial crop can adversely affect, but coffee soon took a place next only to rice in its importance. It is necessary to mention here that the cultivation of coffee, in the beginning at any rate, was subject to the hazards of destruction by pests like the 'bug' and 'borer'. It was also bound up with the vagaries of a world market.

Coffee changed the face of Coorg. It brought in European [563]
planters who settled down all over Coorg; it cut the bonds binding the slaves to their traditional masters; it induced the seasonal inflow of labour from Mysore and South Canara, and finally it brought money to the planter as well as to the labourers on the plantations and to the total community.

The annexation of Coorg by the British did not mean a complete 648
break with past administration. The British administrative system 631
was at first based on the old system, and the modifications intro-

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[1] Op. cit., p. 130.

648 631 duced were few and far between. The authority of village elders and of the hereditary village headman was recognized and the established administrative institutions were continued.

This phase, however, ended soon after 1858 when the administration of India was taken over by the British Government from the East India Company. Coorg then became part of the territories administered directly by the British in India and of the elaborate administrative and judicial machinery stretching over the whole of [671] India. Numerous Acts like the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and Indian Stamp Act applied to every part of India including Coorg.

Under the British, Coorg was a Chief Commissioner's Province, a position which continues even today. Until 1942 the British Resident in Mysore State was also the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, and Coorg was governed from Bangalore, the headquarters of the Resident. In 1942, the two offices of Resident of Mysore and Chief Commissioner of Coorg were separated and a distinguished Coorg, Dewan Bahadur Kēṭōḷira Chengappa was appointed Chief Commissioner. Below the Chief Commissioner was the Superintendent who lived in Coorg. A legislative council consisting of twenty members (fifteen elected and five nominated), presided over by the Chief Commissioner, was constituted in 1924. The council had the right to vote on the budget, move resolutions, and ask supplementary questions.

567 A NOTE ON SLAVERY IN COORG

Slavery was widely prevalent in pre-British Coorg. The slaves and agricultural labourers did most of the actual work of the farm under the supervision of their masters who held the land from the state on one of the several forms of tenure prevalent in Coorg. The number of slaves in 1834, when the British annexed Coorg, was estimated at 6,089, but we do not know whether this included the slaves on the Rāja's farms (or *paṇyas*), who were variously estimated at 1,757, 1,720, 1,500, and 1,233.

Slaves were referred to as *jammada āḷu* (or '*jamma* servants'),[1] and there were two classes of slaves, one praedial, called *bhūmi jammada āḷu* (*bhūmi* = land), and the other personal, called *okkalu*

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[1] It probably meant that they were slaves of the man holding land on *jamma* tenure.

jammada āḷu (*okkalu* = farm, house, family). The former could not be sold apart from the land on which they worked, and when land was sold, they went with it automatically. The personal slaves, on the other hand, could be sold or mortgaged, and had to move with the masters wherever the latter went. They were, in fact, the movable property of the masters.

> The proprietors of the *okkalu jammada āḷu* in Coorg have the power of selling them [the slaves], but not to a person who will carry them out of the country, unless the slaves themselves consent. The rights of slaves consist in receiving subsistence and protection for themselves and their families from their masters, who are bound to observe the custom of the country with respect to the quantity of food and clothing given to them. Three seers of rice for a male slave, two for a female, and one and a half to a boy or girl, are given by their master, independently of salt and curry stuff which are supplied by them, sometimes monthly, and at other times daily. The slaves are likewise entitled to a load of grain once a year, at the time when the crops are reaped. This quantity is called *horay*, which varies in different *nāḍs*. The slaves reside in houses provided for them by their masters in the small village, and a piece of land is appropriated to their use in which they usually grow vegetables or tobacco. Besides the subsistence given to the slaves, and the allowance above-mentioned at the time of the harvest, they are supplied by their masters with clothing twice a year, first, when the seed is sown, and secondly, when the crops are reaped.[1]
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> In regard to the treatment of slaves by their masters, it is said that the cultivators in Coorg, activated by self-interest, if not a better motive, pay much attention to their comfort. Aware as they are that any act of severity on their part will induce their slaves to abscond, a circumstance which would subject them to much trouble and inconvenience, they protect and treat them with kindness as forming a part of their family. The proprietors in Coorg possess no power to inflict severe punishment upon their slaves but they have authority to chastise them moderately for any faults they may commit. . . . The wealth of a cultivator is generally estimated by the number of his slaves, as in proportion to the number he has lands under cultivation. . . .[2]

Certain incidents described in Coorg folklore make it clear that frequently great affection prevailed between master and slave.

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[1] 'Memorandum respecting the condition of the slaves in Coorg, transmitted with Col. Fraser's letter to Mr. Secretary Macnaughten, dated 14th July, 1834', in the volume of appendixes giving the evidence on the subject of slavery, annexed to the *Report of the Indian Law Commission*, 1 February 1839, pp. 545–6.

[2] Op. cit., p. 546.

567 The slave was a member of the master's household and a proverb compares him to one's eldest son. The master had to provide funds for the slave's wedding and have him looked after during illness and old age. On his side the slave was required to perform [702] every type of service. He was also liable to be called upon to bear arms in times of war.

The remedy at the disposal of the slave against harsh treatment was running away either to a different part of Coorg, or to cross the border into a neighbouring country. There was, of course, the risk of being pursued, but it is presumed that the slave took this extreme step only when harsh treatment made his position intolerable. Between the farmers of Kiggaṭnāḍ in the extreme south and those in Wynāḍ, however, there was an agreement by which neither followed up absconding slaves who had crossed the frontier. This usually worked in favour of Coorg, where wages were higher than in Wynāḍ, though work was correspondingly heavier. The slaves in Kiggaṭnāḍ and Wynāḍ regularly crossed the frontier once every few years and they had masters on either side. It was very probable that these slaves belonged to one of the several tribes inhabiting the mountains of Wynāḍ, like the Yerava, Beṭṭa Kuruba, Jēnu Kuruba, and so on. They had the reputation of being absconders and thieves and idlers in comparison with Poleyas from the Kannaḍa country. Yeravas and Kurubas from Wynāḍ fetched a lower price than Poleyas in the market. In any case the price of a slave never exceeded Rs13 (about £1).

564 Slavery had a caste component. The masters invariably belonged 567 to the higher castes while the slaves belonged to very low castes. In Coorg the masters generally belonged to castes like Coorgs, Tuḷu Gauḍas, Kannaḍa Okkaligas, and Airis (smiths) while the slaves came from Untouchable castes like Poleyas, Pāleyas, and Mādigas, and tribes like Yeravas, Aḍiyas, Kuḍiyas, and Beṭṭa Kurubas, and Jēnu Kurubas. It is probable that very poor members of the high castes and castes just above the Untouchables, like the Mēdas (makers of basketry work), hired themselves out as agricultural labourers.

It has already been said that a large body of slaves worked on 648 the farms of the Rājas. In 1834 when the British annexed Coorg 567 there were twenty such farms producing nearly 47,000 *bhaṭṭis* of rice with about 1,757 (according to the highest estimate) slaves working on them. The British, who wanted to abolish slavery, started by freeing the slaves on the royal farms, and this was later extended to include all slaves. 587 648

There was a landslide in the general economy of the country when the slaves suddenly left their masters to work on the coffee plantations. The masters then found that they were unable to cultivate all the wet land in their estate, but under the conditions of *jamma* tenure they were required to pay an assessment of five rupees per hundred *bhattis* of land on all wet land irrespective of whether it was under the plough or not. It was then that the government permitted them to sublet not more than a fourth of the wet land.[1] 587 423

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[1] 'No remission of *jamma*-rent is ever made, except under extraordinary circumstances, such as the death of several members of a family, the entire destruction of property by fire or the loss of a large number of cattle. In these cases and when the produce of their lands has been very meagre, the *jamma* ryots [peasants] are allowed to pay Rs 10 per 100 *bhattis* for the quantity of land which has been cultivated, instead of *five* rupees *for the whole* farm. It is also customary, under such circumstances, or when only women and young children are left in the house to permit the whole of the *jamma* lands to be sublet on *vāra* tenure [division of the crop in equal halves between the tenant and landlord] for periods ranging from one to five years according to the particulars of each case.' Richter, op. cit., pp. 402–3.

II

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

I

C 584 [186] THE existence of subdivisions among Coorgs does not prevent them from regarding themselves, and from being regarded by others, as a single group. Coorgs consider themselves to be Kshatriyas, who constitute the caste of rulers and soldiers in the traditional hierarchy, and rank next only to Brahmins, who are priests and scholars. It is necessary to give here a very brief and general account of the caste system in order to make clear the implications of the Coorg claim to be Kshatriyas.

I 564 Caste is an institution of great complexity. It has its roots deep in history, and even today it governs the lives of 300 million Hindus in several important respects. It is popularly understood as the division of society into a fivefold hierarchy with the Brahmins at the head, followed in order by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or traders, Shūdras or servants and labourers, and, lastly, the Untouchables. The first three castes are called 'twice-born' (*dvija*) as they alone are entitled to undergo the ceremony of *upanayana* which constitutes spiritual rebirth. Only the twice-born castes are entitled to study the Vēdas and to the performance of Vēdic ritual on certain occasions. Caste in the above sense is referred to as *varṇa* and has an All-India application.

The idea of caste as the fivefold division of society represents a gross over-simplification of facts. The real unit of the caste system is not one of the five *varṇas*, but *jāti*, which is a very small endogamous group practising a traditional occupation and enjoying a certain amount of cultural, ritual, and juridical autonomy. I [623] Every *jāti*, or the members of a *jāti* in a particular village or a group of neighbouring villages, constitutes a caste court which punishes caste offences.

There are innumerable *jātis*. Professor Ghurye calculates that there are 2,000 sub-castes (*jātis*) in each linguistic area.[1] This should give some idea of the total number of endogamous subcastes in India as a whole. The importance of the *varṇa*-system

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[1] *Caste and Race in India*, London, 1932, p. 27.

consists in that it furnishes an All-India frame into which the 564
myriad *jātis* in any single linguistic area can be fitted. It systematizes the chaos of *jatis* and enables the sub-castes of one region to be comprehended by people in another area by reference to a common scale. Further, the *varṇa*-system represents a scale of values, and *jātis* occupying the lower rungs have throughout tried to raise their status by taking over the customs and ritual of the top *jātis*. This has helped the spread of a uniform culture throughout Hindu society.

The attempt to fit the *jātis* of any region into the fivefold hierarchy is a very difficult affair. It is possible everywhere to say who are the Brahmins and Untouchables, but there is great confusion in the middle regions. Confining our remarks to south India for the moment, we find that the claims of local *jātis* to be Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are frequently questioned by others. For instance, it is well known that a ruling house claiming to be Kshatriyas were originally potters. Similarly, the claim of a local trading *jāti* to be Vaishya, one of the three twice-born *varṇas* of the Vēdas, is hotly contested by the other castes in the area. It is not uncommon to find a *jāti* included under the Shudra *varna* claiming to be higher than the local *jātis* claiming to be Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Disputes as to relative status are an essential feature of the caste system. This is especially so in the numerous *jātis* belonging to the fourth *varṇa* of Shūdra. In south India the term 'Shūdra' includes the vast majority of non-Brahmin *jātis* and even some reformist sects.

A man is *born* into a sub-caste (*jāti*) and this is the only way of 775
acquiring membership. According to the traditional view, how- 779
ever, birth is not an accident. Certain Hindu theological notions 564
like *karma* and *dharma* have contributed very greatly to the strengthening of the idea of hierarchy which is inherent in the caste system. The idea of *karma* teaches a Hindu that he is born in a particular sub-caste because he deserved to be born there. The actions he performed in a previous incarnation deserved such a reward or punishment, as the case might be. If he had performed better actions in his previous incarnation he would have been born in a higher caste. Thus the caste hierarchy comes to be an index of the state of an individual's soul. It also represents certain milestones on the soul's journey to God.

Thus the idea of deserts is associated with birth in a particular

584 caste. A man is born in a high caste because of the good actions
775 performed by him in his previous life, and another is born into a
779 low caste because of bad actions performed in his previous life.

The other important concept is *dharma*, which has many meanings, one of which is 'that which is right or moral'. The existing moral code is identified with *dharma*. A man who accepts the caste system and the rules of his particular sub-caste is living according to *dharma*, while a man who questions them is violating *dharma*. Living according to *dharma* is rewarded, while violation of *dharma* is punished, both here and hereafter. If he observes the rules of *dharma* he will be born in his next incarnation in a high caste, rich, whole, and well endowed. If he does not observe them he will be born in a low caste, poor, deformed, and ill endowed. Worldly position and success indicate the kind of life a man led in his previous incarnation.

596 One may also reap the reward of one's actions very soon after
their performance. For purposes of such reward and punishment,
[732] a person is identified with his joint family. A man may become
blind because his father, the head of the joint family, made money
in the black market during the war.

783 The concept of pollution governs relations between different
688 castes. This concept is absolutely fundamental to the caste system,
and along with the concepts of *karma* and *dharma* it contributes
to make caste the unique institution it is. Every type of inter-caste
relation is governed by the concept of pollution. Contact of any
kind, touching, dining, sex, and other relations between castes
which are structurally distant results in the higher of the two
castes being polluted. Ordinarily, contact between members of
the same caste, or between members of castes which are structurally very near each other, does not result in pollution. Where
contact does result in pollution, however, the polluted member of
the higher caste has to undergo a purificatory rite in order to be
restored to normal ritual status. Such a purificatory rite is fairly
simple where the structural distance between the castes is not
[264] very great and the type of contact is not serious. Sometimes, as
when a Brahmin eats food cooked by an Untouchable, the resultant
pollution is so great that he or she has to be excommunicated.
Normally, in every caste, women observe the pollution rules much
more strictly than men.

Contact is culturally defined. Touch is contact in all cases.

CONTACT IS CULTURALLY DEFINED - TOUCH IS CONTACT IN ALL CASES.

Frequently the maintenance of a minimum distance between 783
castes is insisted upon. This matter has recieved systematization 576
in Kēraḷa, where elaborate rules have been laid down requiring 688
the minimum distance that should prevail between the various
castes.

Aiyappan, in 1937, gives a scale of distance pollution for several castes: a Nayar must keep 7 ft. from a Nambudri Brahman, an Iravan (Ilavan, Izhuvan, Tiyan) must keep 32, a Cheruman 64 and a Nayadi 74 to 124. The respective distances between these lower castes are calculated by a simple process of subtraction: the Iravan must keep 25 feet from the Nayar and Cheruman 32 feet from the Iravan.[1]

The ban on contact between castes, and the solidarity of a sub- 361
caste, express themselves in the spatial segregation of castes in a 688
village. The Untouchables live everywhere at some distance from the others, while each of the other sub-castes occupies a street or a quarter of the village or town.

Normally a man may accept cooked food and water from a 264
member of the same or equal or superior caste. Food cooked by a
member of a lower caste may not be eaten because such food defiles 688
a man belonging to a higher caste. Mutual acceptability of cooked food denotes equality between the castes concerned, while the movement of food in one direction only indicates that the acceptor is inferior to the giver.

People living in rural areas, and the orthodox, exhibit a preoccupation with the matter of acceptance or rejection of cooked food from different castes. The kind of food, the question whether it is cooked in butter or water, the caste of the person cooking it, and the place (whether temple or home) where the food is cooked, all go to determine its acceptability or otherwise. A tendency to define and systematize is obvious everywhere.

There is a general correlation between diet and status. Brahmins 554
are usually vegetarians, abstaining even from eggs. The Shūdra 262
castes eat eggs and meat. Pork is inferior to mutton, and usually pork-eaters to mutton-eaters. Beef-eaters are the lowest of all. The consumption of toddy, too, begins at some point low down in the caste hierarchy.

Facts have been over-simplified in order to make some general statements. For instance, while Brahmins are usually vegetarians,

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[1] Dr. A. Aiyappan. *The Anthropology of the Nayadis*, pp. 18 seq., quoted by J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, p. 70.

554 the Sāraswat Brahmins of the west coast, and some Brahmins of
262 Bengal, eat fish, while the Kāshmiri Brahmins eat meat. Again,
castes claiming to be Kshatriyas generally eat mutton. The Lingāyats of south India, who are non-Brahmins, are vegetarians and
[572] teetotallers. It must be mentioned here that from the earliest times
vegetarianism has been held up as an ethical ideal, it being considered wrong for an individual to kill other sentient creatures in
[273] order to keep himself alive. Vegetarianism goes hand in hand with
teetotalism, the drinking of alcoholic liquors being forbidden to
the high castes.

264 The acceptance of cooked food by a high caste man from an
688 Untouchable constituted as serious an offence as having a liaison
with an Untouchable, and in the old days both offences were
623 punished, by the caste court concerned, with excommunication
from caste. It is not only the high castes who are particular about the caste of the person from whom they accept food and water, but the Untouchables too are very particular. In Mysore, Untouchables do not accept food and water from smiths, and from Mārka Brahmins. They believe such acceptance would defile them.

Each caste is traditionally associated with a separate occupation.
463 Some of the earlier students of caste were so impressed with this
783 feature of caste that they ascribed the origin of caste to the
564 systematization of occupational differentiation. In rural India the
bulk of the castes continue to practise their respective traditional occupations, though agriculture is common to all castes from the Brahmin to the Untouchable.

Some occupations are considered defiling because of the contact with some defiling object or other necessary to their practise. Swine-herding is defiling because swine defile. Leather defiles, and consequently the making and repairing of shoes is an occupation of the Untouchables. Certain other occupations, while not being defiling, are so strongly associated with low castes that no high caste man will take to them. The tapping of toddy would be a case in point. Finally, any occupation however remotely implying the destruction of sentient life in any form would be prohibited to the high castes. Thus not only butchery, the catching of fish and game, and the raising of sheep and fowls would be prohibited, but even the selling of dried fish and eggs would be regarded as an improper occupation for a high-caste man, especially a Brahmin.

But, nowadays, under the influence of industrialization, the old 463
association of caste with occupation is beginning to break down. [178]

The members of a sub-caste tend to regard their traditional 467
occupation as the natural one for them. Taking up any other 564
occupation is regarded as improper. There is a pride in the skill required for the practice of the traditional occupation, and this skill is a secret which is not easily divulged to members of other castes. In fact, formerly, castes tended to be guilds, and the members of castes regarded their traditional occupation as their monopoly. A violation of this monopoly would result in a fight. The matter could also be taken before the village court and before the king of the region.

Things associated with high castes, their houses, clothes, 584
customs, manners, and ritual, tend to become symbols of superior 673
status. Consequently there is a ban on the lower castes taking them 554
over and, formerly, such a ban was sanctioned by the political authority at the top. In Malabar, until 1865, only the Brahmins were allowed to clothe their bodies above the waist, even the women of the lower castes being prohibited from doing so. In many parts of India the lowest castes were not allowed to have tiled roofs for their houses. Nor were they allowed to build two-storied houses.

A consequence of the extreme stratification implied in the caste 621
system is the tendency of each sub-caste, or each level of sub- 564
castes, to live in a separate social world. The members of a sub-caste inhabit the same quarter of the village or town and frequently are all related to each other by agnatic or affinal links. They share a common culture and ritual idiom. They observe common restrictions regarding food and drink, and have certain caste festivals and rites not shared with others. They practise a common, traditional occupation, the secrets of which they do not share with others. They have caste courts and assemblies where elders of the sub-caste belonging to different villages assemble and decide matters of common concern. The members of a sub-caste share certain common values and are actively aware of this fact when they come into contact with other castes. The autonomy of a sub-caste does not, however, mean that it can live independently of other sub-castes. An Indian village usually consists of a few sub-castes which are mutually dependent and also possess certain interests in common.

582 The sub-caste or *jāti* is the unit of endogamy. Occasionally we find a *jāti* split up into several groups each of which is endogamous. The rule about endogamy is still strictly observed, though a contemporary tendency among the educated members of the higher sub-castes is to marry into another sub-caste of the same level and sharing the same culture. Thus a member of the Mandyam division of the Srī Vaishṇava Brahmins might nowadays marry a member of the Hebbār division of the same larger group, though formerly they would not have done so.

Hypergamous unions occasionally occur between castes. By this a man belonging to the higher caste takes a girl from the lower caste. It is never the other way about. Hypergamous marriages are common in Malabar and Bengal. They occur in other parts of India too.

584 The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritization' in this book, in preference to 'Brahminization', as certain Vēdic rites are confined to Brahmins and the two other 'twice-born' castes.

[184] [177] The tendency of the lower castes to imitate the higher has been a powerful factor in the spread of Sanskritic ritual and customs, and in the achievement of a certain amount of cultural uniformity not only throughout the caste scale, but over the entire length and breadth of India.

[185] Another point which needs specially to be stressed is that the idea of hierarchy embodied in the caste system has been periodically questioned in India. Buddhism and Jainism questioned it quite early in the recorded history of caste. Lingāyaṭism challenged it in the south in the twelfth century A.D. These attempts more or less met with failure, and occasionally the reformist sect either became a caste or reproduced within itself a caste system.

681 Many of the sanctions supporting the caste system tended to
564 disappear under British rule. The British withdrew the explicit as

681 564 well as implicit support which caste usually enjoyed under an Indian monarch. For instance, people who had been punished by caste courts could sue the caste elders responsible for defamation in courts established by the British.

[623] Formerly, an offender against the code of the caste was punished with either fine or, in very serious cases, excommunication from caste. Between themselves, caste councils and village councils completely controlled the conduct of an individual. Caste elders and village elders supported each others' authority.

564 184 Caste guarantees autonomy to a community, and at the same time it brings that community into relation with numerous other communities all going to form a hierarchy. The importance of such an institution is obvious in a vast country like India which has been the meeting-place of many different cultures in the past and which has always had considerable regional diversity. While the autonomy of a sub-caste was preserved it was also brought into relation with others, and the hierarchy was also a scale of generally agreed values. Every caste tended to imitate the customs and ritual of the topmost caste, and this was responsible for the spread of Sanskritization. [177] When this process is viewed on a continental scale and over a period of at least 2,500 years, it is easy to see how Sanskritic ideas and beliefs penetrated the remotest hill tribes in such a manner as not to do violence to their traditional beliefs. Caste enabled Hinduism to proselytize without the aid of a church.

564 [178] Caste, which was so successful in absorbing autonomous groups everywhere, also provided the pattern for relations with non-Hindu groups. Christians and Muslims were regarded as castes, too, and they accepted such a status. Even revolutionary movements which had aimed at the overthrow of the caste system ended by either becoming castes themselves or reproduced the caste system within themselves. The main body of Hindus regarded these sects as castes and not as sects. Thus the caste system effectively neutralized all attempts to change it.

II

564 621 Caste ties cut across territorial ties, and members of the same caste living in different villages have a great deal in common. This type of solidarity has been called in this book 'horizontal solidarity', and it contrasts with 'vertical solidarity', which is

I 584 621 common to a number of castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy. For instance, the members of a village community, whatever their caste, have certain interests in common. Similarly, people speaking the same language have a certain solidarity. The Brahmin and the Untouchable speaking the same language have certain cultural forms in common, even though they belong to the extremes of the hierarchy. The structural situation everywhere in India is subject to the pulls exerted by these opposed types of solidarity.

I 584 197 I [187] In any large geographical area in India it is usual to find a minority of sub-castes who speak a language different from the one which is locally dominant. Sometimes two or three such minor languages are found in a single area. Migrations from one part of India to another have been extremely common in the past, and this has been specially so within each of the two major geographical areas of India, continental and peninsular India. The immigrant castes usually claim a higher place in the local caste structure than is conceded by the others.

I [184] The speakers of the same language, whatever their caste, possess certain cultural forms in common, and when, in the same geographical area, there are castes speaking different languages, each becomes aware of the cultural forms which mark it off from others.

It will be seen that any geographical area in India exhibits enormous structural and cultural complexity. In a tiny province like Coorg, speakers of every Dravidian language, and of Konkaṇi, Marāṭhi, and Hindusthāni, are found.

III

c 584 c [171] Coorgs constituted the aristocracy under the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, holding important positions in the administration and very nearly monopolizing the army. All the other castes in Coorg, excluding the Brahmin, Kōmṭi (Telugu-speaking trading caste of south India), and Lingāyaṭ acknowledged their dominance by taking over their customs and manners, and in some cases even their speech. It has already been mentioned that high castes like Kannaḍa-speaking Okkaligas and Tuḷu-speaking Gauḍas, both peasants, in north Coorg tried to pass off for Coorgs. In the recent past a few of them, those with a little money, married Coorgs, and this is probably the reason why we find in the north one branch of a joint family speaking Koḍagi while another speaks Kannaḍa. 584 Until recently Coorgs living south of Mercara had a prejudice against marrying those living in the north. The latter were re- [186] garded as inferior and derisively referred to as those living 'beyond the hills' (*boṭṭat mēlē*), the implication being that Coorgs south of Mercara were the best Coorgs.

Coorgs formed a compact unit in relation to other castes. They possessed wealth and power, they liked dancing, competitive games involving the exercise of skill and strength, hunting, and soldiering. In the Vēdic or classical caste system these virtues are attributed to Kshatriyas, the caste of warriors and kings, who are next only to the Brahmin in the hierarchy. The resemblances between Coorgs and the Vēdic Kshatriyas are striking indeed in the matter of values, and it is understandable that Coorgs should regard themselves as Kshatriyas. But the classical Kshatriyas, as [796] one of the three 'twice-born' castes, were entitled to perform certain rituals at which sacred verses (*mantras*) from the Vēdas were recited by the priests. Coorgs do not perform any of these rituals and Vēdic *mantras* are not recited when a Coorg is given a name, or marries, or dies.

Coorgs, like other Caste Hindus, object very strongly to the 262 eating of beef, and the strength of their objection was early recog- 554 nized by the British who banned all slaughter of cattle for the table in Coorg in 1835. But the Coorg dietary includes pork and liquor, and this is occasionally singled out for comment by the other castes. The correlation between status and dietary is particularly strong in the interior of south India, and the Coorg claim to be considered as Kshatriyas comes up against this fact. Coorgs rightly point out that the Rajputs of north India eat pork and that this has not prevented them from being generally regarded as Kshatriyas. However, Rajputs eat only the wild pig and not the domesticated one.

In the Sanskritic myth (*Kāvēri Purāṇa* or *Kāvēri Māhātmya*) 773 about the River Kāvēri, Coorgs are said to be Ugras,[1] or the descendants of the marriage of a Kshatriya prince and his Shūdra wife. The Kāvēri Myth thus cleverly reconciles the economic and

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[1] Ugra means 'strong, formidable, terrible, violent, angry, passionate, cruel, fierce, pungent, hot, high and noble. It is also the name of a mixed tribe, descended from a Kshatriya father and Shudra mother, and of Malabar.' M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p. 172.

723 military power of Coorgs with their lack of certain rituals and their somewhat catholic dietary. It is interesting to note that Shri N. Chiṇṇappa considers the account of the origin of Coorgs given in the Kāvēri Myth to be a true, historical account. He, however, mentions that the majority of Coorgs regard themselves as Kshatriyas and not as Ugras.[1]

584 Coorgs seem to be a distinct community in occupation of the forested mountains of Coorg for many centuries, and with a way [177] of life of their own. But they were throughout in contact with Sanskritic Hinduism, and religious movements like Lingāyaṭism affected them considerably.

[162] There are two subdivisions among Coorgs today: the first division is 41,026 strong, while the second contains only 666 individuals, according to the 1941 Census. Members of the latter division are called Amma Koḍagas, or Amma Coorgs, and they are highly Brahminized in their customs and ritual. They are vegetar- [291] ians and teetotallers, and nowadays they constitute an endogamous unit. Like the Brahmins they wear the sacred thread and observe [769] annual *shrāddhas* or ancestor-feasts at which only vegetarian food is offered to the dead ancestors.

564 173 551 It is said that Amma Coorgs are the descendants of a Coorg man and a Brahmin girl of Wynāḍ, daughter of one Tāyikāṭ Tambiran, who expelled his daughter from his home as she attained puberty before marriage. (Formerly, among Brahmins, it was regarded as both sinful and shameful to have in the house an unmarried girl who had attained puberty.) This girl married a Coorg, and her descendants came to be known as Amma Coorgs (*amma* = mother), and they observed the customs of their mother. The name of an [104] Amma Coorg man has the suffix '*amma*' even though '*amma*' means 'mother', and is normally a suffix to a woman's name in certain parts of south India. In Coorg, a woman's name has the suffix '*avva*' which is the same as '*amma*', and a man's name has the suffix '*appa*' which means 'father'. It is said that formerly Amma Coorgs, who were concentrated in south Coorg, used to claim kinship with a similar group of people in Wynāḍ.

564 173 In the last few years of the reign of the last Rāja of Coorg, Amma Coorgs claimed to be 'Kāvēri Brahmins', the descendants of the Brahmin disciples of the sage Agastya, husband of Kāvēri, before the latter flowed away as a river. The disciples twitted the master

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[1] *Paṭṭōlē Paḷamē*, pp. 19–20.

with having deserted Kāvēri for Kanaké, a semi-divine woman, 584 173 who later assumed the form of a river, joining the Kāvēri at Bhāgamandḷa. This annoyed Agastya who cursed his disciples, 'Brahmins of Matsyadēsha [traditional name for Coorg in the Sanskritic myths], let not the people of this land obey you. Let them not give you enough to support you.' The distressed disciples appealed to Mother Kāvēri against her husband's curse. She took pity on them and told them that so long as they believed in her they would not find it difficult to support themselves.

In November 1834 some Amma Coorgs donned the sacred 564 792 thread at Balmuri on the banks of the Kāvēri. They became followers of the Brahmin monastery (*maṭha*) in Rāmachandrapura in Shimoga District in Mysore State. In 1847 the head of this monastery sent them instructions as to the ritual they were entitled to perform. Amma Coorgs from Kiggaṭnāḍ who had not donned the sacred thread in 1834 did so a few years later at the Irpu temple under the auspices of the Brahmin monastery at Kānūr in Uḍipi in South Canara. Sometime afterwards a few Amma Coorgs who still remained unattached to a monastery became disciples of the monastery at Subramaṇya in South Canara.[1]

Amma Coorgs exemplify a tendency which has always been 564 [178] present in the caste system: a small group of people break off from a larger whole of which they are a part, Sanskritize their customs and ritual, and achieve a higher status than their parent-body in the course of a few decades.

The main body of Coorgs do not contain any subdivisions today, but formerly, during the time of the Rājas, they were divided into two groups called 'Saṇṇa' and 'Malla' Coorgs. These are Kannaḍa, and not Koḍagi, terms, and elderly informants say that these terms were used only by the Kannaḍa-speaking outsiders and not by Coorgs themselves. This sounds somewhat far-fetched, though there does not seem to have been a sharp line dividing the Saṇṇa and Malla Coorgs. 'Saṇṇa' in Kannaḍa means 'small', and 'Malla' means 'big', and the terms were derived from the two different varieties of rice, one big and the other small. The latter variety is superior to the former, and Saṇṇa Coorgs regarded themselves as superior to Malla Coorgs.

564 174 Richter tells us that 'Saṇṇa Coorgs may originally have formed a small nucleus connected with their Nāyakas or chiefs who were

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[1] N. Chiṇṇappa, *Paṭṭōlé Paḷamé*, pp. 20–21.

584 174 exterminated by the usurping Rājas of the Ikkēri family, and may in their own eyes have constituted a sort of aristocracy; while Malla Coorgs represented the aggregate main body which was augmented by new accessions from kindred tribes'. He further states that Malla Coorgs include 'those whose descent from Wynāḍ Cheṭṭis or other foreign connexions is traditionally known, for it is no secret among the Coorgs that such additions have been made to their number and the house-names of such bear witness to the fact'.[1]

[554] He also mentions that a poor Coorg was relegated to the inferior group, while a well-to-do Coorg, or one who held a high post in the government, claimed to be a Saṇṇa Coorg.

[582] Cole tells us that Saṇṇa Coorgs greatly outnumbered the Malla Coorgs, that marriages between the two were not frequent, and that the Saṇṇa Coorgs were scattered all over Coorg while Malla Coorgs were more or less confined to north Coorg.[2]

The last point made by Cole seems particularly open to doubt as there seem to have been some Malla Coorgs in the extreme south. Again Saṇṇa Coorgs seem to have been concentrated in Coorg south of Mercara, and it has already been mentioned that the southerners regarded themselves as being superior to the northerners.

[104] The early writers on Coorg refer to a division of Coorgs called 'Boḍḍu Coorgs'. Coorgs south of Mercara seemed to have regarded the Coorgs settled in north Coorg, in Yeḍavanāḍ, Gaḍināḍ, and Surlabhimuttunāḍ as inferior to themselves in intelligence. Hence the appellation '*boḍḍu*', which means 'stupid'. Richter and Cole[3] differ as to who the Boḍḍu Coorgs were, but it seems certain that Boḍḍu Coorgs were small pockets of the Coorg community scattered in areas inhabited mostly by Tuḷu Gauḍas and Kannaḍa Okkaligas. They were influenced by the customs and manners of the latter castes, and occasionally these groups even intermarried. The situation was further complicated by the fact that both Tuḷu Gauḍas and Kannaḍa Okkaligas aspired to pass off for Coorgs.

Boḍḍu Coorgs were then Coorgs who lived at some distance from the main core of their group. Marriages between Boḍḍu

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[1] G. Richter, *Castes and Tribes found in Coorg*, Bangalore, 1887, pp. 21–22.

[2] R. A. Cole, *Manual of Coorg Law*, 1861, secs. 3, 5, 6.

[3] Ibid., sec. 3; Richter, *Castes and Tribes found in Coorg*, pp. 21–22.

Coorgs and other Coorgs were not very frequent. Saṇṇa Coorgs 564
looked down upon Boḍḍu Coorgs whose customs and manners were 174
somewhat different from their own: differences between cognate groups as to minute points of custom and ritual frequently come to stand for the identity of each of them as against the others. This is a common feature of caste.

A point which needs stressing because it is not very typical of 564
the caste system is the comparative ease with which Coorgs 174
admitted into their fold non-Coorgs belonging to fairly high castes. 186
Moegling wrote in 1855, 'strangers are received among them and naturalised without difficulty, and such as have been excommunicated are received without much ado'.[1] Richter, writing sixteen years later, says that 'even within the memory of the present generation strangers were received by and incorporated with the Coorgs. There is now a dispute pending about six families in Kiggaṭnāḍ, who ten years ago were, by the Head Sheristedar Nanchappa, received as Coorgs, but after his death were expelled from the clan [caste] by the rest of the people. The settlement of the dispute will perhaps be only a matter of time. . . .'[2] Formerly some families of Wynāḍ Cheṭṭis, Kannaḍa Okkaligas, and Tuḷu Gauḍas were received into the Coorg fold. The complete absorption of recruits from other castes naturally took some time, and till it was accomplished the conservative Coorg families did not freely intermarry with the new recruits. Even now one hears a Coorg elder saying, 'such-and-such a family are really Kannaḍa Okkaligas who called themselves Coorgs 50 or 60 years ago. Until recently Coorgs would think twice before inter-marrying with them.'

IV

There are more than forty main castes and tribes in Coorg, but 564
Coorgs come into intimate contact with only a few of them. A c
very brief account of their relations with each of these castes will now be given. It is important to add that the duties mentioned against each caste might frequently be performed by similar castes of equivalent status: for instance, it might be either a Tuḷu Brahmin or Malabar Brahmin who performs the priestly duties at a village temple, and the Tuḷu Brahmin is again split up into Shivaḷḷi and

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[1] *Coorg Memoirs*, p. 55.

[2] *Manual of Coorg*, pp. 231–2.

564 Havik subdivisions. Similarly, Poleya is a blanket term for anyone of the following Untouchable sub-castes, Kembaṭṭi, Aḍiyas, Pāleya, Poleya, Kukka Poleya, Baḍaga Poleya, and Mādiga.
791 Pāleyas are split into further subdivisions.

793 The Brahmins, Kaṇiyas, and Baṇṇas (or Paṇikas) are the three [778] castes with whom Coorgs come into contact mostly in ritual contexts. The Brahmins are priests not only in the great shrines at [788] Tala Kāvēri, Bhāgamanḍla, and Irpu, but also in numerous small temples scattered all over Coorg. Coorgs from every part of Coorg go on pilgrimage to the great shrines, and at Bhāgamanḍla, where the Kāvēri and Kanaké meet, it is customary for them to offer balls of rice to their ancestors under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

793 437 In those villages where a Brahmin is functioning as priest he is paid annually, at harvest time, a certain quantity of paddy by every house in the village. In this respect he is treated like the barber, washerman, smith, and others. The priest is an essential member of the village organization.

In addition to being priest of the village temple, the Brahmin performs certain ritual services for Coorgs. These services vary from one part of Coorg to another, and not infrequently from one joint family to another: Coorgs in Kiggaṭnāḍ, for instance, are more Sanskritized in their ways than Coorgs elsewhere, and again some Coorg families are more Sanskritized than their neighbours. But everywhere the Brahmin priests perform certain minimum duties: at *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs, he comes with consecrated water which he gives the members to drink, and also sprinkles a little of it on certain parts of the house. When a wedding takes place in a Coorg house, he comes to bless the bridal pair and give them consecrated water.

564 793 754 The formation and crystallization of the division of Amma Coorgs is itself an acknowledgement of the strength of the influence of the Brahmins on Coorgs. But the Brahmins do not always operate at the Sanskritic level. Nearly a hundred years ago Dr. Moegling wrote that Coorgs were greatly afraid of the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara.

> The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say that if one of the Tantri Brahmins be offended and curse a man he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of the masters of the black art to say to a man, 'do you

not see?' or 'do you not hear?' and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness 564
or even death.[1] 793

Occasionally temples dedicated to Bhagavati or Bhadrakāḷi [154]
were under the control of Tantri Brahmins in South Canara.
The latter had the right to appoint the priest and oracle to each of
these temples: the priest was a Brahmin while the oracle belonged
to any high caste like Coorgs.

The Tantri Brahmins knew the ritual surrounding the construc- 793
tion of a temple and consecration of images. They visited the [778]
temples under their management once every few years when their
Coorg followers made money-offerings to them. Moegling tells
us that a single such visit would yield the priests between Rs
200 and Rs 300, a substantial sum in those days, and which testifies
to the hold exercised by the Tantri Brahmins over Coorgs.[2]

The fact that the Tantris sanctioned the institution of oracles 787
at their temples shows the extent to which they had compromised 793
with non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation:

> Some Coorg is also chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a large number of candidates presented by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some *mantra* and puts some holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.[3]

The Kaṇiyas are another caste with whom Coorgs come into 791
intimate contact in ritual contexts. They are astrologers and magi- [564]
cians from Malabar who have settled in Coorg for a long time, and
their hold on Coorgs was very much greater in the past than it is 787
today.

Every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment, or it will fail. Only the Kaṇiya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology. The first ploughing of the rice-fields, the first sowing, and the cutting of the sheaves have all to be performed during auspicious periods. A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day and at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually

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[1] *Coorg Memoirs*, pp. 56–57.

[2] Op. cit., pp. 56–57.

[3] Moegling, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

791/ compatible. But not all Coorgs have horoscopes, and marriages 787 are frequently arranged without resorting to the Kaṇiya astrologer.

Coorgs formerly resorted to the Kaṇiya on every conceivable occasion. If an ox strayed, or if someone was ill in the house, the Kaṇiya was consulted. It was believed that he was able to tell, by consulting the planets, whether the strayed ox would return and whether the patient would recover. Sometimes he suggested the performance of some rite which would enable, for instance, the ox which had strayed to return home and the [782] patient to recover. Perhaps a minor deity or spirit like Guḷika, or an ancestral spirit, was annoyed because it had not received the necessary attention from the members of the particular joint family. The Kaṇiya would then suggest the performance of appropriate propitiatory ritual.

792 The Baṇṇa and Paṇika are two low castes, originally from [564] Malabar, who are very similar to each other and who actually perform the ritual which the Kaṇiya prescribes for his Coorg client. These two castes stand in a relation similar to the one in which the dispensing chemist stands to the doctor in the Western [769] world. The Kaṇiya says, for instance, that the ancestors of his client are angry because they have not been propitiated for a long time, and he suggests the performance of the *kāraṇava téré* which is an elaborate propitiation of ancestors lasting over a day. The Baṇṇa (or Paṇika) actually performs the elaborate ancestor-propitiation at which the ancestors of the Coorg joint family possess the Baṇṇa oracle.[1]

Each Baṇṇa family serves a group of villages which they are under an obligation to serve. Besides ancestor-propitiation and other occasions when their services are wanted by families, Baṇṇas play very important parts at the festivals of village-deities where they are oracles, dancers, and cutters of the sacrificial animals.

322 Coorgs come into contact with the blacksmith, carpenter, and 325 goldsmith usually in non-ritual contexts. The blacksmith and 328 carpenter make the agricultural implements and domestic articles, and also help in building the massive houses of Coorgs. Some of the articles made by them, like the bier and palanquin, are used on ritual occasions.

328 The goldsmith, in addition to making the gold and silver orna-

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[1] Richter's *Manual of Coorg*, pp. 169–70, contains an example of the kind of service which the Kaṇiya performed with the aid of the Baṇṇa.

ments, ritually bores the ears of boys and girls. Formerly, the 328
ritual boring of a boy's ears was an important initiation rite, marking 304
his transition from boyhood to adulthood.

The clothes washed by the washerman (Maḍivāḷa) are not only 296
clean but ritually pure (*maḍi*), and ritually pure clothes should be 292
worn on ritual occasions. The washerman's services are necessary 783
on every ritual occasion. For instance, at a Coorg wedding he has
the duty of supplying clean cloths for the bridal pair to walk on, and
cloths to cover the ceiling above the bridal seat. He has similar
duties at the festival of the village-deity. He also acts as the ritual
purifier when a birth or death occurs in a Coorg house. But some
Coorgs, especially those in Kiggaṭnāḍ, resort to the Brahmin for
ritual purification.

Contact with a barber defiles a Coorg, and every Coorg has a 305
purificatory bath after being shaved by a barber. Such a bath is 783
necessary in order to restore the shaved person to normal ritual
status. The barber's services are, however, indispensable at a [302]
wedding and a funeral, and shaving is an essential preliminary act
for men on ritual occasions.

The Mēda occupies a very low position in the caste hierarchy. [564]
He makes artefacts like baskets, fish-traps, and receptacles of cane, 285
vōṭé reed, and bamboo. He is indispensable at a Coorg festival, [538]
dance or hunt, where he beats his tom-tom. The Mēda is a byword
for stupidity in Coorg folklore.

The strength of the bond prevailing between the Coorg master 357
and his Poleya servant expressed itself in ritual. Formerly, one or 765
two members of the Poleya servant-family observed ritual mourning
for their dead master or mistress. On the day their mourning
terminated they were given gifts of cloths and provisions by their
masters. The Poleya servants (men) also performed a mourning
dance (*anga kaḷi*) in front of the master's house before the corpse
was removed to the burial-ground.

At a Coorg wedding, just as the bridal pair are about to leave the 357
bride's house for the groom's, a Poleya servant of the bride's 585
family comes forward, holding a torch in his left hand, while he
spreads a cloth before them. The groom throws money, equivalent
to a *paṇa* (about three annas), on the cloth. The Poleya then removes
the cloth, thus enabling the bridal pair to proceed: contact
with a cloth touched by a Poleya defiles a member of a high caste.

Sometimes ritual occasions stress the structural distance that 564

584 prevails between the higher castes and Poleyas. For instance, Poleyas may not come out of their huts during the first eighteen days of the biennial festival of the deity Kētrappa at Bēngūr. It is believed that they will suffer some misfortune if they come out and see the festival-priests (*kāvukāras*) going about their sacred work.

792 Quite the opposite attitude prevails towards Poleyas at the festival of the Bhadrakāḷi of Kunda. The Poleya oracles have many duties at the festival, though they are not permitted to enter the temple of Bhadrakāḷi. They may not touch a high caste person, but they have the right of barring anyone from entering the temple. They stopped me presumably because they considered my dress—I was wearing a suit—improper, and they let me in only after a Coorg friend had explained who I was.

564 796 Ritual occasions might either emphasize the structural cleavages that normally exist between high and low castes, or they might tend to minimize them. The former leads, among other things, to the exclusion of the lower castes from ritual, while the latter leads to their inclusion. But inclusion does not mean that structural distance is abolished totally for the duration of the ritual occasion. What happens may be more accurately described by stating that certain individuals belonging to the low castes have ritual roles which place them temporarily in a superior position *vis-à-vis* the high castes.

791 769 At an ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, a Baṇṇa acts as oracle: he is possessed by each of the ancestor-spirits in turn, and while the possession lasts, he is identified with the particular ancestor possessing him. As the temporary vehicle of the spirit of an ancestor he is entitled to say and do things which he normally would not dream of saying and doing. As ancestor, he might censure the head of the joint family for not attending to his duties properly.

[178] Nowadays young Coorgs who are sceptical about their traditional beliefs tend to see the Baṇṇa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation as an actor playing several roles in a play, and not as the vehicle of the spirits of their ancestors. A young Coorg told me that he had seen a Baṇṇa oracle saluting a big official while he was alleged to be possessed by an ancestor-spirit, and this was proof to him of the fact that all possessions were just make-believe and not real.

554 769 Another Coorg youth told me that while he was witnessing an ancestor-propitiation at a friend's house, the Baṇṇa oracle, address-

ing him, said '*bā kunyi*' (come, child). My informant, incensed at 554
being called a 'child' by a low-caste Baṇṇa promptly slapped him. 765
The term 'child' is normally used by an elder towards a youth, but [801]
only an elder of the same or equivalent or superior caste is entitled to this privilege, and not an elder of a low caste. My informant regarded the oracle as a Baṇṇa, and not as the ancestor of a friend: he had projected the normal structure into the ritual context. Needless to say he did not believe that a Coorg ancestor possessed a Baṇṇa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation.

The Baṇṇa normally occupies a low position in the hierarchy, but the fact that he is the master of the complicated technique of ancestor-propitiation, and that he is possessed by these spirits during the propitiation, temporarily put him in a high position. The contemporary decline of belief in ancestor-spirits, as well as the increasing lack of appeal of the mode of propitiation adopted by the Baṇṇa, have tended to confine him to the position normally occupied by him in the caste structure.

The Brahmin occupies the highest position in the hierarchy and 793
is also the master of a highly complicated ritual technique. But in 554
spite of this there is frequently a certain inconsistency between the positions occupied by him in ritual and secular contexts respectively. In secular affairs power is actually possessed by the man who has wealth and a large following, whatever his caste might be. But even he has to accord the Brahmin the highest place in ritual contexts. The complex relation prevailing between a wealthy and powerful Shūdra Hindu and his poor Brahmin priest comes to mind: the Brahmin is in the Shūdra's pay and protection, but still he has to be respected as a Brahmin and especially in ritual contexts. Where the Brahmin priest is also a scholar or holy man there does not seem to be any inconsistency between his ritual and secular roles.

V

Caste has a tendency to stress horizontal ties. It unites members 564
of the same caste living in different villages and distinguishes 621
them from other castes in the same village. It is extremely unlike the village community in which members of different castes are united by certain common values and are marked off from other villages. The existence of feuds between villages in the past

564 emphasized the solidarity of the village and offset the separating
621 influence of caste.

The solidarity prevalent between the various castes in a village
621 (or *nāḍ*) finds ritual expression during *putri*, the harvest festival of
796 Coorgs. On this occasion, the representatives of the priestly,
564 artisan, and servant castes living in the village (or *nāḍ*) visit the house of every Coorg in their area, and either give a gift or perform a service characteristic of their caste. They are given in return gifts of provisions like rice, rice-flour, pepper, salt, jaggery, coconut oil, coconuts, and a giant yam (*putri geṇasu*) which is harvested during *putri*.

[793] The local Brahmin priest visits, in turn, each Coorg house in his
[783] village (or *nāḍ*). He purifies the house by sprinkling it with a little consecrated water which he carries in a ritually pure vessel. He also gives each member of the house a tiny spoonful of consecrated water to drink. The priest is sent away with a gift of provisions.

[791] Like the priest, the Kaṇiya astrologer visits the various Coorg
[777] houses in his village (or *nāḍ*). He informs the head of each house when the rites of *néré kaṭṭuvudu* (see pp. 230–1) and cutting the paddy sheaves should be performed. These rites are performed only during auspicious periods.

The members of the artisan castes follow the Kaṇiya. The Tachchāyiri or carpenter brings with him a gift of a new wooden ladle with which to stir the festival curry made with all the vegetables grown at this time of the year. He also brings a bamboo receptacle (*kutti*) in which the severed paddy sheaves are brought home. The Kolla or blacksmith brings a new sickle with which the sheaves are cut. The Mēda brings a new harvest basket (*putri pachchiya*) which is used in the festival. The Kumbāra or potter brings a new pot in which the harvest curry is cooked. Finally, the Poleya brings a new mat which is used in the festival.

The harvest festival is the biggest of the various calendar festivals of Coorgs, and on this occasion each of the several castes with whom Coorgs live in close and intimate contact does some service, or brings some gift, characteristic of it. Gifts are given in return to each of them. The exchange of gifts strengthens the bonds prevalent between Coorgs and other castes.

At the harvest festival each of several interdependent castes living in a village performs some essential service which cannot be performed by another, and this fact is brought home to the

villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a 621
tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival 564
tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village. 796

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint 596
family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in 428
the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, 562
while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely
limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of
an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of [539]
an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps
to kill in a hunt'.[1]

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a 596
daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka
parijé* or *makka parijé* way (see pp. 129–30), which has the effect
of granting the children of either form of union membership of
their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the [597]
okka in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the 462
work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks 596
done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done
by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land
by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never
been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs,
and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nāḍ*-assemblies were formerly vigorous [623]
institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men [437]
went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their
surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, [596]
and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the
elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as
the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

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[1] Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

467 596 water from the domestic pond or well and carry manure in reed baskets to the fields.

562 [521] The sexes are generally segregated. The outer veranda serves as a club for the men, and they sit down on the benches there, drinking, chewing betel, and talking. The women rarely visit the veranda.[1] Similarly, men rarely join the women who are all presumably sitting in the kitchen, or in one of the inner rooms. [264] Men and women dine separately, the women dining after the men.

[574] When relatives visit a Coorg house, the men guests join the men hosts in the veranda, whereas the women guests join the women hosts in an inner part of the house. [533] During the harvest festival and festival of the village-deities the men sing and dance while the women watch them from a distance. [791] Usually the men play a more active part in the festivals than the women. There is an oracle in the festival of every village-deity, and the oracles are usually men. Women oracles are indeed rare, but where they function they are important.

562 684 Women are expected to observe a stricter code of conduct than men. For instance, formerly, a Coorg woman who had committed adultery with a low-caste man was summarily thrown out of caste, whereas a lapse on the part of a man was not treated with equal seriousness. Again, there was some difference in the punishment meted out to a man and woman: a man was liable to be fined or excommunicated, whereas excommunication was the only punishment for a woman.

182 562 Different ideals are held up for men and women. Strength, skill in fighting and hunting, and courage are admired in a man. A proverb states, 'men should die on the battlefield, and women should die in child-bed'. The killer of a tiger or panther and mother of ten children were both accorded the honour of a *mangala* ceremony. (See Chapter III.)

562 Formerly women seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than they do nowadays. Elderly informants remember that even as recently as fifty years ago women used to sing and beat cymbals in public on festive occasions. Coorg folksongs tell us of women who killed tigers and held assemblies of men to ridicule. In some folk-

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[342] [1] Frequently a Coorg house has a separate entrance which enables the women to move in and out of the house without being seen by the men who are gathered in the veranda.

songs it is the woman who takes the initiative in a love affair and 562
seduces the man with whom she falls in love.

The general impression one gets from the folksongs is that women [533]
enjoyed much greater freedom in the past than they do today. It is
probable that in the last 200 years Coorgs have orientated them-
selves more and more towards the patrilineal Kannaḍigas and
moved away from the matrilineal Nāyars. This was accompanied
by denying women active roles at the caste dances and festivals,
and the home was seen more and more as their proper sphere of
action.

But nowadays, under the influence of Western ideas, the Coorg [177]
woman is once again coming to the fore. Education is more wide-
spread among Coorg women than among the women of other [871]
castes, including Brahmins. They are nurses, teachers, and doctors,
and do not hesitate to live outside Coorg. The economic position of
Coorgs and the fact that they marry comparatively late are some of
the factors responsible for the greater spread of education among
Coorg women. The greater ease with which Coorg women have
'emancipated' themselves is probably because they have not been
as long under patriarchal ideas regarding womanhood as their
sisters in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

VII

Among Coorgs, as among other Indians, respect has to be shown 888
to elders. When a Coorg meets an elder on a ritual occasion he has
to salute the latter by bending the upper half of his body and touch-
ing the elder's feet thrice with both hands. After each touch the
younger man takes his hands to his forehead, where he folds them
together. The elder touches the bent head of the younger man
with both hands and then brings them together at the chest or
forehead. A woman elder is expected to take only her right hand
to the right side of her forehead, but I have seen women acknow-
ledge a salutation in exactly the same manner as men.

When he is saluted an elder usually utters a blessing like 'may [788]
you live long', or 'may you live happily'. But sometimes the bless-
ing might be a long one, carrying a prayer to God and the ancestors
to grant the younger person longevity, happiness, and 'eleven
children, boys as well as girls'.

When two equals meet they salute each other merely by bringing [576]

[Facing p. 48]

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A GIRL SALUTES HER FATHER

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A BRIDE

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

888 [576] their palms together at the chest, and one asks the other '*saukhya?*' (happy?), and the other replies '*saukhya*' (happy).

[516] [481] Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that, over fifty years ago, when he was a boy, he had to go on a walk every evening with his male cousins and elders. The boys walked, with their arms folded across their chests, several yards behind the elders.[1] They took care to speak in a low tone and to avoid laughing aloud. Young people had to behave very circumspectly in the presence of their elders: they were forbidden, for instance, to cross or stretch their legs before an elder.

888 601 A senior, let alone an elder, has to be addressed by the appropriate kinship term. It shows disrespect to address him by name. Even when one meets a senior who is not related he is addressed by a suitable kinship term. For instance, a very old man is addressed as 'grandfather', whereas someone only a few years senior to the speaker is addressed as 'elder brother'. An elder usually addresses a younger person by name, or by some term like 'child'. Two people address each other by name only when they are approximately equal in age and when there is some familiarity between them.

601 587 There is an important exception to the rule that an elder may address a younger person by name: a woman may not address her husband's younger brother by name, even if the latter is her junior by many years. In such a case the ancient Coorg rule, 'even a seventy-year-old woman should salute a seven-year-old boy', applies. Leviratic unions are preferred in Coorg, and this means that a woman's husband's younger brother might one day be her husband. And a husband may not be addressed by name. A man's wife uses the honorific plural towards him, whereas he uses the singular towards her.

601 Relatives who are placed in a position of respect are not addressed by name, but by the suitable kinship term. This is because calling a person by name is not regarded as consistent with putting him in a position of respect. A woman is required to show respect to her husband and to his younger brother who is her potential husband. She calls him *bava* (brother-in-law).

888 551 Respect for seniority or age is so deep-rooted in Coorgs that whenever they want to place a person in a position of honour they endow him with artificial or social seniority. There is the classic

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[1] Both the folding of the arms across the chest and walking behind the elders show the respect the younger people have for the elders.

888 instance of Kaiyandira Appayya who saved the honour of his *nāḍ*
551 and its temple by defeating and killing the fighter Kullachenda Chondu. A grateful *nāḍ* decreed that none, not even elders to Appayya, may address him by name. He was not permitted to salute an elder by touching the latter's feet. He was also prohibited from doing a number of things which ordinary Coorgs did, as, for instance, wearing the black Coorg gown (only the white gown is sacred), ploughing, and eating bamboo-shoots.

796 At the harvest festival the astrologer may choose a young boy to
888 perform the rite of cutting the sheaves. Such a boy is put into a position of ritual respect till the festival is over. He wears a white gown and he may not be touched till he has brought the severed sheaves home. Further, he is not permitted to salute an elder till the ritual is over. In other words the accordance of extreme respect to him necessitates the endowment of seniority for the duration of the ritual.

VIII

596 The Coorg *okka* seems to be stronger and more sharply struc-
[184] tured than the joint family elsewhere in south India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal *tarwāḍ* of the Nāyars, and the patrilineal *illam* of the Nambūdris. Every *okka* has an ancestral house (*ain mané*) built on the ancestral estate. Formerly, most of the members of the *okka* lived in the ancestral house, but nowadays only one or two segments inhabit it, while the rest are scattered all over Coorg and, occasionally, all over India. All the members of the *okka* gather together only on certain occasions, such as the marriage or death of a member, the harvest festival, the festival of the local village-deity, and the periodical ancestor-propitiation.

596 The ancestral house and estate are accorded respect, and it is
769 usual to have ancestor-shrines (*kaimaḍa*) or ancestor-platforms
778 (*kāraṇava taré*) near the ancestral house. Coorgs, even those who are living away from the ancestral house, have some attachment towards it, and this expresses itself in having marriages and ancestor-propitiations performed there in preference to anywhere else.
[764] Also, a Coorg prefers to be buried after death in his ancestral burial-ground which is a corner of the ancestral estate used for disposal of the dead members of the *okka*.

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596 The ancestral house is usually a substantial building of stone and

342 mortar, with solid, carved woodwork. Masons and carpenters
596 from Malabar build them, and Coorg ancestral houses consequently
resemble greatly the houses of well-to-do Nāyars. The
house is usually situated on an elevation, and a narrow, high-walled
and winding lane (ōṇi) leads up to it. From the windows in
the upper story one usually obtains a fine view of the surrounding
[628] country. Formerly, in the days when feuds, or *kuḍupi* (*kuḍippaka*
in Malayāḷam), between joint families were common, and a
surprise raid (*kaḷḷa paḍé*) from a hostile *okka* was always a possibility,
anyone coming with unfriendly intentions exposed himself
to view from the windows of the ancestral house. The house
was built like a fortress and was able to stand a siege for several
596 days.

423 The ancestral estate usually includes an extent of jungle, some
[313] grazing land, and valleys in which rice is grown. The jungle
provided the household with the necessary timber and fuel. A
[764] part of the jungle is reserved for burying or cremating the dead
[351] members of the *okka*. There is a kitchen-garden near the main
building. A well or pond provides water for domestic purposes.

[178] Every house includes an ancestor-shrine or ancestor-platform.
Uncarved stones, representing cobra-deities, are planted on platforms
built around the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. There may
also be other uncarved stones representing minor deities like
Pūda and Guḷika.

596 According to Lewis Rice,[1] in the seventies of the last century
the Coorg *okka* frequently consisted of twenty or thirty, and occasionally
even fifty members, all residing under one roof. He further
tells us that previous to the invasion of Coorg by Tippu Sultan in
the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to
find in a house thirty or forty adult male relatives living together.
Many *okkas* seem to have had 120 to 150 people, all living in the
ancestral house.

Nowadays the *okka* commonly consists of two or three generations
of agnatically-related males, their wives, and their children.
[591] Girls born in the *okka* go out on marriage as residence is patrilocal,
but it sometimes happens that a woman remains unmarried for a
596 variety of reasons. In such a case she stays in her natal *okka*. An
587 *okka* also includes the widow of a deceased member. As mentioned
earlier, leviratic unions are preferred amongst Coorgs, and a widow

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[1] *Mysore and Coorg*, Bangalore, 1878, vol. iii, p. 329.

of marriageable age marries a younger brother of her dead husband. 596 Even if she does not do so, she stays in her husband's *okka* looking 587 after the children. She goes out of her conjugal *okka* only if she marries a member of a different *okka*.

All the members of an *okka* are descended from a common ancestor. 596 The spirits of the dead ancestors (*kāraṇavas*) are regarded 769 with great reverence and propitiated periodically. It is believed 776 that they continue to take an interest in the affairs of the *okka*. They expect the surviving members to look after the property and interests of the *okka*, to observe the rules of the moral code, and to show piety towards the various deities and themselves. They have the power to reward those who are pious and to punish with disease and misfortune those who are impious.

The eldest male member of the most senior agnatic branch is 596 the head (*koruvukāra* or *paṭṭēdāra*) of the *okka* whose properties he looks after and whose affairs he administers. The younger male members are called *kikkararu* and they have to obey the head in all matters concerning the *okka* as a whole. The head of the *okka* is usually also the eldest male member of it, and this union of headship and seniority in the same person results in his enjoying a great amount of power in domestic matters. Personal qualities [828] such as hard work, sobriety, chastity, piety towards manes and gods, unselfishness and impartiality increase the headman's powers.

The headman's powers are balanced by his duties: he has to see that the expenses of the household are met, the members of the *okka* do not quarrel with each other, the ancestral lands are properly cultivated, and so on. He has always to weigh in his own mind how every act of his is regarded by the adult men in the *okka*. It is not known whether formerly every *okka* had a council composed of the adult men in it, but it is known definitely that when a headman proved himself very incompetent all the adult men in the *okka* met together and proceeded to elect a new headman. In the last seventy years the Karavanḍa *okka* twice elected new headmen to replace the existing ones. The right to replace an old but incompetent [888] headman with a young and competent man is sanctioned by the Coorg saw (*paḷanjol* = old saying), '*ariyuvavanē periyavan*', which means 'the wisest is the eldest'. We call attention here to the equation of wisdom with seniority, an equation which is used even in replacing an old man by a young one.

596 423 Until the beginning of the last century the immovable property of an *okka* was regarded as impartible, and property descended from one generation to another without being split up in the process. In this respect Coorgs differed from other Hindus and, consequently, Coorg agriculture escaped the two great drawbacks of agriculture elsewhere in India, the subdivision of land into minute holdings and fragmentation or scattering of holdings over a wide area.

All earlier writers on Coorg—Connor, Moegling, Cole, and Rice[1]—are unanimous in holding that the immovable property of a Coorg *okka* is traditionally impartible. But some time after the defeat of Tippu in the closing years of the eighteenth century, some Coorg *okkas* were permitted by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas,[2] used to the Hindu idea of partition, to divide off. The example of these Coorgs was followed by many others. Consequently, 'in 1858 the *takkas* [social heads] and headmen of the Coorgs represented that the loss and ruin occasioned to their ancient houses by this innovation [was very great], and the Judicial Commissioner in additional Special Appeal Suit No. 117 of 1858–9 passed a decree declaring that division was contrary to the ancient custom of Coorg'.[3] The fact that the ancestral property was impartible was responsible to a great extent for preventing the *okka* from splitting.

596 423 178 The British also encouraged, although indirectly, the idea of partition of the ancestral property. They granted, for instance, *jagirs* or assessment-free lands to Coorgs who had taken part in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837. These *jagirs* were granted to individuals and not to the *okkas* of which they were members.

Coorgs who were government officials under the British bought farms and coffee- and orange-gardens with their savings, and the law courts established by the British permitted these to be regarded as the property of the individual acquirer and not of the *okka* of

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[1] Connor, *Memoirs of the Codagu Survey*, pt. ii, Bangalore, 1870, pp. 29–30; H. Moegling, *Coorg Memoirs*, 1855, p. 30; R. A. Cole, *Manual of Coorg Law*, secs. 115–17; L. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg*, vol. iii, p. 329.

[2] Rice tells us that the Lingāyaṭ Rājas encouraged the idea of partition in order to break up the huge joint families of Coorgs. The Rājas wanted to increase the area under cultivation and also, according to Rice, they disliked intensely the fraternal polyandry of Coorgs. Rice remarks, 'Coorgs still viewed any deviation from this ancient custom [of polyandry] with the greatest abhorrence.' Op. cit., p. 329.

[3] Cole, op. cit., secs. 160, 165, 182.

which he was a member.[1] In addition to this, recent changes in 596
Hindu law, which apply to Coorgs also, have been such as to en- 423
courage individual acquisition at the expense of the *okka*. 178

The ancient custom of Coorgs recognized individual property [421]
only to a very limited extent, and that too only in movables. For instance, the younger members of an *okka* could cultivate, in the non-paddy season, and after they had contributed their daily quota of work to the joint estate, crops like ginger and turmeric. When these were sold a share was given to the *okka* for having provided the land on which they were grown.

The encouragement given to the ideas of partition and individual acquisition, the uprooting of Coorgs from their ancestral estates owing to the new political and economic structure stretching all over India, and the growing appeal of individualist ideas to the people, are all adversely affecting the solidarity of the *okka*.
The elementary family, which was a weak entity in the traditional [594]
structure, is emerging with greater distinctness nowadays.

IX

In a sense, only men are full members of the *okka*, but such 596
rights as women do possess in it are of paramount importance to 585
them, and the granting of these rights in the bridegroom's *okka* is the crucial point in the marriage ritual. The granting of rights to the bride in the groom's *okka* is accompanied by the severance of her connexion with her natal *okka*. But such severance is not complete and irrevocable. The entire process is symbolized in the transference of twelve pebbles from the bride's natal *okka* to her conjugal *okka*.

After marriage, then, a girl is a member of her conjugal *okka*, 596
and her membership does not become extinct even if she becomes 428
a widow. She is entitled to stay in her conjugal home and to be maintained out of its income. She has also the right to be buried after death in its burial-ground.

The bride is given membership in the groom's *okka*, and not rights in the groom's share in the ancestral property of his *okka*. The entire idea of an individual having a share in the ancestral property of his *okka* is a comparatively recent introduction into Coorg law. Traditionally, the immovable property of an *okka*

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[1] G. Richter, *Manual of Coorg*, p. 130.

596 428 was both inalienable and impartible. But when partition did actually take place, it was done with the consent of all the members.

Nowadays, occasionally, a Coorg widow who is marrying her dead husband's younger brother is given rights anew in the *okka* of her new husband. This novel custom proceeds from the idea referred to above, that the bride is only given rights in her husband's share [594] of his *okka's* property. It indicates, however, the growing importance of the elementary family among Coorgs.

[587] When, however, the widow wants to marry someone who is not a member of her dead husband's *okka*, her connexion with the latter is first of all ritually broken. She then reverts to her natal *okka*, and at her new marriage her connexion with her natal *okka* is ritually severed, and rights are granted to her in her (new) husband's *okka*.

That is to say, a woman is compensated for the lack of the same quality of rights which a man has in his natal *okka* by the fact that she always enjoys a double membership: she never completely ceases to be a member of her natal *okka*, and at the same time she [586] is a member of her husband's *okka*. She can go back to it under certain circumstances like widowhood or divorce.

Membership of the *okka* is extremely important, and lack of membership in some *okka* or other is tantamount to social extinction. [848] Elders consequently try hard to see that the children of extra-marital alliances get berthed somewhere. It is right and proper that the father of the children should secure them membership of his *okka*, but if for some reason or other he cannot be persuaded to do so, the children are made members of their mother's *okka*.

X

596 606 The wife of the headman of the *okka* is the mistress of the household. She is called '*manépaṇikārti*' (house-work-woman). Ideally, all the women in the *okka* have to work under her guidance. The relationship between the various women in the joint family is frequently one of conflict. There is first of all the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, which is celebrated in Coorg and other South Indian folklore as one of conflict. In a society where the sexes are segregated even inside the household and where elders are very highly respected, the mother-in-law,

at least in the first few years of marriage, is a much more important 596
relative for a girl than even her husband. And this relationship is 606
basically one of conflict. A girl is also in a relation of conflict with
her husband's sisters, married as well as unmarried, and with her
husband's brother's wives.

The conflicts between the women in the patrilocal *okka* strike 596
at its solidarity. Elsewhere in south India where partition is easy, 602
they lead to division of the joint family. But in Coorg where the
okka is a very strong entity, and where partition is legally for-
bidden, they make the harmonious working of the *okka* extremely
difficult.

Besides the conflicts mentioned above, certain lines of cleavage in the *okka* are obvious. The distinction between the sexes, which is present in the whole of the society, is also present in every unit of it. So is the distinction between members of different generations. Enormous emphasis is laid on seniority, and this is visible not only between members of different generations, but also between members of the same generation. The younger member has to behave deferentially towards the older.

Before the introduction, in however grudging a form, of the 594
principle of partition, and of the new ideals associated with in- 178
dustrialization and Westernization, the elementary family was not 596
a powerful unit. It obtained only a grudging recognition in ritual,
which was quite consistent with its relative lack of emphasis in the
total structure. A tendency of recent times is the strengthening of
the elementary family at the expense of the *okka*. The elementary
family is increasingly becoming the real residential, commensal,
and economic group with certain ties with the *okka* from which it is
emerging, or has just emerged.

The existence of these divisions inside the *okka* did not prevent 596
it from acting as a unit in relation to other *okkas*. The *okka* was the [622]
basic unit of society, and certain offices like the headmanship of 476
the village, *nāḍ*, and the local temple traditionally ran in certain
okkas. Again, contribution to collective tasks was on the basis of
the *okka*. For instance, each local high caste *okka* had to send at
least one man and one woman for every Coorg wedding in the vil-
lage. Similarly, it had to send representatives to the festival of the
village-deity, and for repairing roads and building bridges. All the
adult men in an *okka* were required to attend a collective dance or
hunt.

596 672 Individual responsibility was not entirely ignored, however. An old usage lays down the maximum fine that could be levied on a guilty man[1] (as distinct from the *okka* of which he was a member) as nine annas and three *bhaṭṭis* of paddy. Again, when a person was guilty of a grave offence even his *okka* joined with his caste in excommunicating him.

XI

621 The institution of family friendship (*aruvāmé*) was formerly far 572 more important among Coorgs than it is today. In a Coorg village 596 houses are scattered over a wide area, and a Coorg's nearest Coorg or other high-caste neighbour is usually several hundred yards away on the other side of a hill or valley. Formerly, the jungle was heavier and there were no good roads, and these increased the [628] difficulties of communication between neighbours. Besides, feuds were common, and hostile raids from unfriendly villages or *nāḍs* were always a possibility. A Coorg sometimes had to get up in the middle of the night to fight for his life.

Under the circumstances it is easy to see the need for socially stressing the tie of neighbourhood. Two *okkas* usually, though not always, stood in the relation of family friendship to each other, and were frequently related by marriage. The tie of family friendship was a traditional one, so that two *okkas* found that they had inherited this relationship. In the marriage rites, the *aruva*, or head of the friendly *okka*, is asked whether he is the traditional *aruva* or the *aruva* hired with gold for the occasion. The traditional family friend, it is hardly necessary to add, commanded much more respect than the family friend 'hired' for the occasion.

The relationship of family friendship was between two *okkas* and not between two individuals. The headman of the *okka* and his wife were certainly more important than the other members in this relationship, but this was in virtue of the positions they occupied in the *okka*.

At a wedding or death in an *okka* the members of the 'friendly' *okka* had certain duties, duties which are even now performed. The headman of the 'friendly' *okka* is the master of ceremonies on ritual occasions. The younger members of his *okka* and womenfolk

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[1] It is likely that the fine was paid out of the private funds of the guilty man, and that where he had none, his *okka* came to his rescue.

are also required to render help. For instance, at a funeral the 621
womenfolk of the 'friendly' *okka* were required to cook and serve 572
food to the mourners. 596

XII

No reference has been made so far to territorial groups in Coorg 631
except for mentioning, in Section V, an instance of the co-operation 621
that prevails between the various castes living in a village or *nāḍ* during the harvest festival. The village is the smallest and most important of the territorial groups, and the *nāḍ*, consisting of several villages is the next bigger group. Traditionally Coorg was divided into thirty-five *nāḍs* and twelve *kombus*. A *kombu* literally means 'horn' or 'branch', and in the administrative context it means the area covered by the sound of a brass horn. It is not known what purpose was served by this unit. The twelve *kombus* together formed the kingdom of Coorg ruled by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas.

It has already been mentioned that a village in Coorg Proper is 621
not as physically compact as a village in the eastern plains. But this does not make it any the less real. The village acts as a unit on certain occasions and its unity obtains ritual expression. The people of a village have a great attachment for it. Besides, every village [623]
has a council of elders, and the council is presided over by the *ūr takka* or village headman, whose office is hereditary. The headmanship (or any other traditional office) is always conceived of as belonging to a certain *okka* and not to an individual.

Like the village, the *nāḍ* is a unit which corresponds to the 634
sentiments of the people, and is not merely an administrative division imposed by the Rājas. The number of villages in a *nāḍ* varies from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*: there are 11 villages in Bēngunāḍ, 5 in Ballatnāḍ, 16 in Kaḍiyetnāḍ, 10 in Eḍénālknāḍ, and 9 in Mūrnāḍ. These are ancient *nāḍs*, but the boundary of a *nāḍ* has frequently been changed in the past. It was changed, for instance, when the entire administration of the country was reorganized by either Muddu Rāja (1638–86) or his son Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II, 1687–1736). The number of *nāḍs* remained 35 as before, but their boundaries were changed. Subsequently, under the British, the number of *nāḍs* were reduced successively to 28, 24, 19, and 11.

The headman of a *nāḍ* is called *nāḍ takka*, and while every

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

[p. 58]

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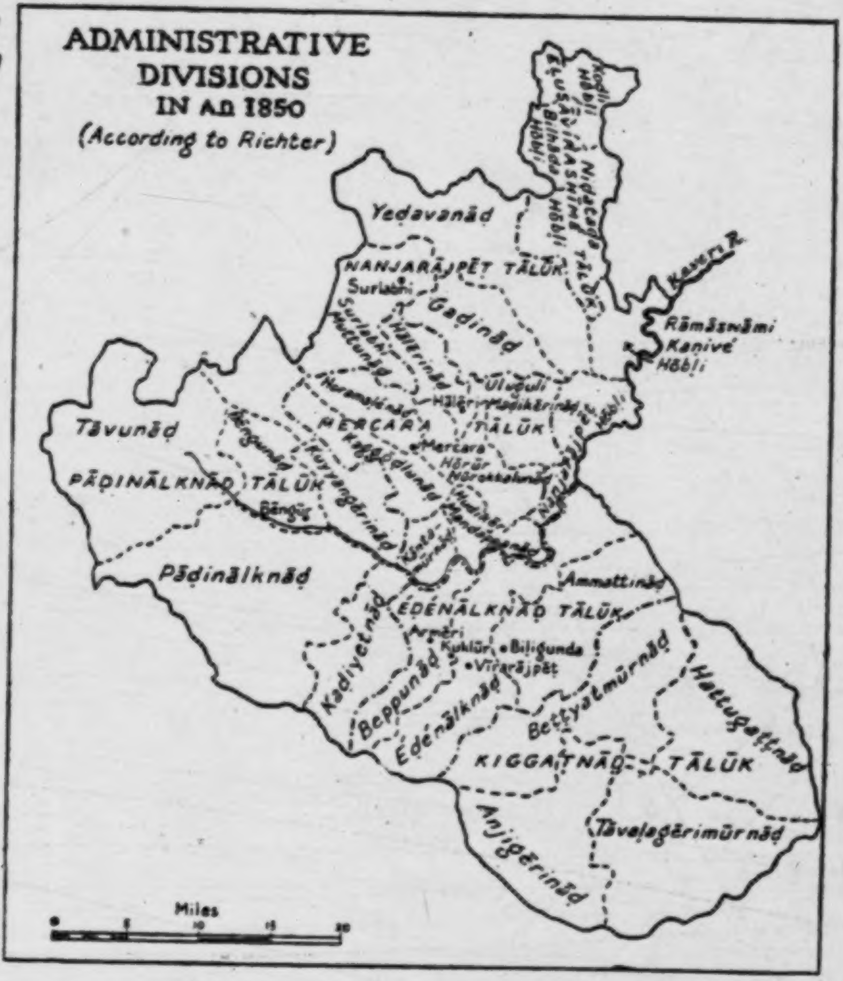
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS IN AD 1850
(According to Richter)
Kodli Hōbli
Yelusāvira Shime
Bilihadu Hōbli
Nidata Hōbli
Nanjarājpēt Tāluk
Kaveri R.
Rāmāsvāmi Kanive Hōbli
Yedavanād
NANJARĀJPĒT TĀLUK
Surlabbi
Gadināḍ
Surlabbi Muttunāḍ
Hālērināḍ
Horamalenāḍ
Ulugulli
Hālēri
Madikērināḍ
MERCARA TĀLUK
Mercara
Hōrūr
Kaggōḍlunāḍ
Kuyyangērināḍ
Bengunāḍ
Tāvunāḍ
PĀDINĀLKNĀḌ TĀLUK
Bāngūr
Pādinālknāḍ
Ammattināḍ
ĒDĒNĀLKNĀḌ TĀLUK
Armēri
Kuklūr
Biligunda
Virarājpēt
Kadiyetnāḍ
Beppunāḍ
Ēdēnālknāḍ
Bettyatmūrnāḍ
Hattugattnāḍ
KIGGATNĀḌ TĀLUK
Anjigērināḍ
Tāvalagērimūrnāḍ
Miles
0
5
10
15
20

3. Map showing Administrative Divisions in *circa* 1850

634 village has only one headman, a *nāḍ* might have an indefinite number varying from one to seven.

In Map 3 (*c.* 1850) Coorg is divided into 28 *nāḍs*, and this is the earliest map we have of Coorg. If the *nāḍ*-headmen existing today are related to the 28 *nāḍs* of Map 3, it will be found that 9 *nāḍs* have 1 *nāḍ*-headman each, 10 have 2 each, 3 have 3 each, 2 have 4 each, another 2 have 6 each, 1 has 5, and another 7. Only 1 of the 9 *nāḍs* having 1 *nāḍ*-headman each is in Coorg Proper, and 2 of the 10 *nāḍs* having 2 *nāḍ*-headmen each are in north Coorg. All the *nāḍs* which have more than 2 *nāḍ*-headmen each are in Coorg Proper. Out of a total of 70 *nāḍ*-headmen, 58 are in Coorg Proper and only 12 in north Coorg.

[101] It has been mentioned earlier that Coorgs predominate in Coorg Proper, which more or less forms a distinct culture-area within Coorg. Most headmen are Coorgs, and it is well known that the few non-Coorgs who hold headmanship have done so by virtue of having bought the lands of *okkas* in whom headmanship was vested.[1]

634 184 It is then not unreasonable to conclude that *nāḍ*-headmen are indigenous only to Coorg Proper and that they have been extended to north Coorg by the Rājas. This is the reason why the *takka*-organization in north Coorg has such a formal appearance. Again, there are neither *sīmé-* (or *dēsha-*) *takkas*, the highest category of headmen, nor *ūr takkas*, in north Coorg. In this part of Coorg the headman of a village (*ūr*) is called *paṭēl* as he is in Mysore, and he is usually not a Coorg.

634 It is likely that the proliferation of *nāḍ*-headmen in Coorg Proper is due to the fact that every *okka* which achieved prominence in local affairs claimed headmanship. After the annexation of Coorg by the British, individuals occupying high positions in the administration and who had acquired wealth were able to call themselves headmen. This fact is very generally known to old Coorgs.

[623] Like the village, the *nāḍ*, too, has an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various *okkas* in it; and it acts as a unit on certain occasions. An appeal lies from the decision of the village-assembly to the *nāḍ*-assembly.

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[167] [1] The lands of the two *sīmé*-headmen in Tāvunāḍ, Pōrēyanḍa and Paruvanda, who were Coorgs, have now been bought by the Kuḍupajjé and Sūratalé *okkas* respectively, and the latter are immigrants from South Canara belonging to the caste of Gauḍas or peasants.

634 Above the *nāḍ*-headmen there are *sīmé-* (or *dēsha-*) headmen, of whom there are eight in all. The *sīmé*-headman has precedence over the *nāḍ*-headman at a gathering where both are present.

634 692 631 The division of the country into twelve *kombus* or 'horns', and the establishment of four *paṭṭis* (literally, the open paved yard before a Coorg's house) or courts for hearing appeals from village and *nāḍ*-assemblies, appear to be only administrative devices imposed from above, and not traditional institutions of the people [533] which functioned vigorously. The *dēṣha keṭṭ pāṭ*, a folksong which gives an account of the administrative system introduced by either Muddu Rāja or Doḍḍa Vīrappa,[1] mentions the existence of twelve *kombus*, and gives a list of the eight *sīmé*-headmen and four appellate courts. A caution should be entered here against treating this song as evidence of the system as it actually existed. The picture it presents is too tidy and systematized, and it is not improbable that it sacrifices accuracy for neatness and order.

It is likely that before Coorg was conquered by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas the biggest territorial unit was a group of two or three or more *nāḍs* led by a chief who called himself Nāyaka. The chiefs constantly fought among themselves, and this made it easier for the Lingāyaṭ Rājas to conquer them and extend their authority over the whole of Coorg.

Two or three *nāḍs* seem to have also come together for purposes of defence against a common enemy, for hunting, and for hearing appeals from the decisions of lower assemblies like the village-[23] assembly and *nāḍ*-assembly. It is interesting to note, however, that while folklore contains occasional references to an appeal to an assembly composed of the men of two or three *nāḍs*, there is no reference to an appeal to a *paṭṭi*, one of the four appellate courts mentioned in the *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*.

XIII

621 564 The village represents a different type of solidarity from caste. The latter stresses the ties prevalent between members of the same caste scattered in different villages, whereas the former stresses the ties of the different castes living in the same village. Caste stresses the importance of the high castes and more or less ignores the lowest castes. When a Coorg says that when there is a wedding

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[1] N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 29.

in a village every *okka* must send at least one man and one woman 621
to help in the work of the wedding, what he really means is that 584
when there is a wedding among Coorgs or other high castes, every high caste *okka* must send one man and one woman. This does not, however, apply to the lowest castes. The latter, of course, do their share of the wedding work, but they are not included in the rule mentioned above. The contribution of the low castes is essential on every occasion, but they co-operate at a different level from the high castes. Again, where there is a wedding or death among the lowest castes, the high castes certainly help, but do not otherwise participate in the event. In brief, the solidarity of a caste results in a stressing of the ties between the members of the same caste living in different villages, while the solidarity of a village results in stressing the ties between members of different castes living in the same village. Caste ties cut across village ties, while village ties both limit the extension of caste ties beyond the village and stress the interdependence of the various castes forming a local community.

The unity of the village is stressed when disaster overtakes one 621
of the *okkas*. For instance, when a house is destroyed by fire every 731
okka in the village has to contribute in cash, kind, and labour towards the building of a new house and the maintenance of the unlucky *okka* till they are able to stand on their own feet. The latter are required to repay the money and goods given to them some time after they have recovered from the disaster. Several years ago the Kōṭera house in Bāḍaga village was destroyed by fire and the entire village co-operated in building them a new house.

When a death occurs among Coorgs, the news is announced by 763
the firing of a rifle at regular intervals. Everyone who hears the [202]
shots has to suspend all work, including agricultural work, and 621
proceed at once to the mourning house. The news of the death is also communicated through messengers belonging to the Poleya caste, and the Poleya servant of any Coorg house may be commandeered for this purpose. The master may not object.

Every *okka* in the village has to stand by the bereaved *okka* 765
during the mourning period. They are required to attend to the 621
fields and gardens of the bereaved *okka* till the latter are freed from the ritual mourning. They have also to supply the bereaved *okka* with food until the corpse is removed from the house: there

621 765 is a taboo on cooking being done in the mourning house till the corpse is removed.

621 796 On certain occasions the entire village co-operates, though the lower castes co-operate at a different level from others. An example will make clear what we mean. Every caste in the village co-operates during the harvest festival of Coorgs. It is the harvest festival of *Coorgs* alone, and not, for instance, of the Mēdas or Poleyas. The Mēdas beat the tom-tom and Poleyas play on their pipes to the dancing of Coorgs. Every Coorg *okka* has to send all the adult men in it to the village dance and hunt. Poleyas and Mēdas act as beaters at this hunt while the other castes do the shooting. Later, there is a dinner for the entire village, called, appropriately enough, *ūrormé*, i.e. 'village harmony', where the game killed in the hunt is cooked. Every male member of the village participates in this dinner, Coorgs and equivalent castes sitting together, while Mēdas and Poleyas form separate groups. The meat is cooked by Coorgs and equivalent castes, while every house brings its own supply of *puṭṭ*, or cooked rice-flour, which is eaten with the curry. The Brahmin does not participate in the village dinner as it is cooked by castes lower to him in the hierarchy. Besides, he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. It may be noted that the Brahmin is almost as frequently excluded from village activities as the Untouchable. The Brahmin does not hunt or dance, nor does he favour the propitiation of deities with animal sacrifice and liquor.

[574] Every member of the village is required to observe certain rules during the harvest festival. He has to keep the door of his house open and the sacred domestic lamps lit. He must be hospitable to parties of singers and dancers and mix with other villagers. He must refrain from abusing and fighting even if there is provocation from the other party.

Though parties of Coorg singers did not visit the houses of Mēdas and Poleyas, even the latter were required to observe the rules. Every caste, including Mēdas and Poleyas, was present when inquiry into cases of breaches of rules took place.

[585] A wedding in a Coorg house requires the co-operation of all the castes in the village, and the fee payable to them is fixed by custom. It is the same with the festival of the village-deity, though sometimes the Poleyas are almost entirely excluded from this festival. During the festival of Kētrappa at Bēngūr, the Poleyas may not be

During the festival of Ketrappa at Bengur the Poleyas may not be
seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, 621
but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with 796
pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from 776
a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the
birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in
the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance
of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities
they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level
from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the 622
headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where [364]
dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are [363]
kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and
ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village [485]
tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing
through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. 622
From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of 829
conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The
epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which
means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for
seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a
respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on
any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or 622
nāḍ), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the 623
headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb [539]
has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the
area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village
affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was
assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the
various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which
means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens [367]
in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting
business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival
(*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity
(*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure [344]
(*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for
the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than 623
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623 681 they are today. They controlled the public conduct of a Coorg very thoroughly. The principal sanctions at the disposal of the assembly were *poḷévāḍu* or fine, and *poramaḍi* or excommunication. There was a regular scale of fines laying down the maximum that could be levied on an individual, and on an entire *okka*, village, or *nāḍ*. The maximum fine on a village headman guilty of an offence was very much higher than the maximum for an ordinary individual, and similarly, the maximum for a *nāḍ*-headman was higher than that for a village-headman.

[689] Fines are levied for minor offences such as failure to attend a communal dance or hunt, or to observe the requisite food restrictions during the festival of a village-deity. Failure to pay the fine resulted in the guilty person being excommunicated from the village. He was not permitted to attend the village-assembly or a communal dance or hunt. He was not allowed to enter the village temple or take part in the festival of the village-deity,[1] but he was allowed to remain in any house in which he had a right to stay, such as his natal house, or his wife's natal house. The guilty person could resume his normal social status after he had paid the fine, half of which went to the village temple and the other half to the elders who levied the fine.

688 [558] Serious offences were punished by the offender's being excommunicated from caste. Such a punishment was usually for a prescribed period, during which the offender was not entitled to stay or dine even in his natal house. Not only was he prohibited from attending a dance or hunt, but he was also prohibited from going into any house in the village. The barber was not allowed to shave him, the washerman was not allowed to wash his clothes, and similarly artisan castes could not make anything for him. Even his cattle were not allowed to graze on the common pasture.

783 778 After the prescribed period of punishment was over, the offender had to go on a pilgrimage to Bhāgamanḍla where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. He had to have his head and faced shaved, and bathe in the sin-cleansing waters of the sacred Kāvēri. He then went to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara for worship, and this was followed by a visit to the source of the River Kāvēri, which is probably the most sacred spot in Coorg. He bathed in the bigger of
783 the two springs and worshipped the smaller spring. He then

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[1] A person polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death suffers from similar disabilities.

returned to his village and gave a feast to the headmen and 783
villagers. This completed his readmission to society.

The man who commits an offence against the moral code of the 689
community is treated as an extremely impure person; and the 783
purificatory rites which he performs before being readmitted to society are the same as those which first-grade mourners perform before attaining normal ritual status. An offence against the ethical code results in pollution, a fact which makes clear to everyone the nature of the offence. Such an offence also angers the ancestors and deities.

When a person was, however, guilty of a very great offence 684
against the caste code, like adultery or fornication with someone 558
belonging to a very low caste, the offender was irrevocably excommunicated. Moegling mentions[1] the case of a Coorg woman who was guilty of adultery with a man belonging to one of the Untouchable castes and who was consequently thrown out of the caste irrevocably. She was forced to live among Untouchables. Finally, both she and her Coorg husband, who was personally ready to forgive her, became converts to Christianity.

A person guilty of the offence mentioned above was considered as good as dead, and the rite of excommunication was called, appropriately enough '*kōḍi kittuvudu*' or 'tearing the cloth'. The offender and his relatives held a hemmed cloth, such as the one used by Coorgs for tying round the head, between them, and this was torn in two. Thereafter the offender ceased to exist for them. Even his son was not bound to maintain him while alive or perform funeral rites after his death.

XIV

A *nāḍ* is a bigger unit than a village, and it is usually more homo- 634
geneous culturally than a larger area which includes it and a few [101]
other *nāḍs*. The differences between *nāḍs* are considerable if we 184
compare geographically extreme instances like Kiggaṭnāḍ and Nālknāḍ, but even if we take two neighbouring *nāḍs* they are bound to differ in certain respects, differences in matters of detail which might appear unimportant to the outsider, but which appear as extremely important to the inhabitants of the *nāḍs* in question. In fact, each *nāḍ* sees the points in which it differs from its neighbours

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[1] Op. cit., pp. 213–14.

634 as symbols of its identity and individuality, if not superiority.
184 The saw '*ār nāḍku nūr pājé*', which might be translated as 'six
[539] *nāḍs*, hundred customs', testifies to the great cultural diversity within Coorg.

A *nāḍ* might differ from other *nāḍs* in the matter of the date of observance of important festivals such as the harvest festival and festival of arms. It might also differ in the articles used in the festival ritual: for instance, the plants used in the harvest festival ritual vary in different *nāḍs*, and this is due to the fact that in each area the plants locally prolific are chosen to express a wish for growth.

634 The various villages of a *nāḍ* co-operate on certain occasions
[796] as the harvest festival and the periodical festival of the local village-deity. During the harvest festival, on the day after the village dance (*ūr kōlu*), a dance for the entire *nāḍ* (*nāḍ kōlu*) is held
[578] in which all the men of the *nāḍ* take part. Games testing the strength
[526] and skill of individuals are also held on this occasion, and this provides an opportunity for the canalization of inter-village rivalry, just as at a festival in a village the games played canalizes inter-*okka* rivalry.

634 When the bridegroom is marching in state to the bride's house
585 it is customary for the villages in the groom's *nāḍ* to offer him the 'plantain honour' (*bāḷé birudu*): a row of three stout plaintain stems are fixed to the ground near the boundary (*mundalé*) of the village or *nāḍ*, and the groom is asked to cut the stems with his sword. The groom delegates someone to cut the stems on his behalf. The man offering the groom the 'plantain honour' should be wearing a Coorg gown, and he offers the party warm water to wash their hands and feet, mats to sit on, and betel leaves and areca-nut to chew. (Warm water, mat, and betel and nut are all symbols of hospitality and respect in Coorg as elsewhere in India.) If the party arrive at night the host provides them with torches for the road. The groom has to pay a money gift of two *paṇas* (about six annas) to the host in acknowledgement of the honour and hospitality done to him and his party.

634 A man has a great love for his *nāḍ*. This comes out repeatedly in
539 Coorg folklore. An infant boy, called Chondu, was orphaned, and the *nāḍ* elders had to make arrangements for his care. When Chondu reached the years of discretion he wanted to show how deeply he appreciated what his *nāḍ* had done for him. He deter-

mined to become a great fighter: he would challenge every village 634
and *nāḍ* to produce someone to fight him in single combat (*otté* 539
poyit). He would defeat them all and this would bring great glory to his *nāḍ*. He travelled about Coorg sitting in a palanquin, challenging every village either to produce someone to fight him or give him a sum of money in acknowledgement of defeat. His technique was to go to the village temple and order the priest to stop worshipping the deity till either his challenge was met or the sum of money asked for was paid. The latter course was chosen by most villages.

His challenge was, however, accepted by a mere boy called Appayya (of the Kaiyandira *okka*) in Arapaṭ village in Kaḍiyetnāḍ. When Appayya's mother remonstrated at his having accepted the challenge of a great fighter like Chondu, the spirited boy replied, 'Until now you were my mother, but from now on my *nāḍ* is my mother.' Appayya defeated and killed Chondu by resorting to trickery: he first of all blinded Chondu by suddenly throwing sand into his eyes and then stabbed him.

Honours were showered on the boy-hero by a grateful *nāḍ*. The ceremony of *mangala* (see Chapter III) was performed for him. He was placed in a position of seniority to everyone in the *nāḍ* and none was allowed to call him by name. He had to be addressed as '*pēriya moli*' which means 'big elder'. He was prohibited from touching anyone's feet in salutation. Also, as he had ensured the continuity of worship at the Choli Povvedi temple in Arapaṭ, certain privileges were conferred on Appayya *vis-à-vis* the temple: he could go there even when under pollution (*polé*), and he could go to the annual festival of the deity sitting in the palanquin in which his opponent had sat during his journey through Coorg.

The office of the 'big elder' was hereditary in the Kaiyandira *okka* till the latter became extinct. The headman of the *okka* was the 'big elder', and when he died his successor became the 'big elder'. The honour was conferred at a *mangala* ceremony which was performed in the open quadrangle of the Kaiyandīra house.

Coorg was traditionally divided into twelve *kombus*, but the 634
kombu appears as a shadowy unit beside the *nāḍ* and the village; and the occasional coming together of two or three *nāḍs* under a chief during the pre-Lingāyaṭ days, or to discuss a matter of common interest, cannot be treated as a permanent feature of the structure.

634 While groups wider than the *nāḍ* are shadowy, the same cannot be said of the *sīmé*-headmen, who are higher than *nāḍ*-headmen. There are eight *sīmé*-headmen in Coorg Proper, and they are usually mentioned in pairs. Each pair of *sīmé*-headmen comes from the same *nāḍ*: Kaḷḷangala and Boḷḷera from Tāvaḷagērimūrnāḍ, Mātanḍa and Buḍuvanḍa from Beppunāḍ, Pānḍira and Paṟadanḍa from Nālknāḍ, and finally, Pōreyanḍa and Paruvanḍa from Tāvunāḍ.

596 Feuds between *okkas* seem to have continued well into the latter
628 half of the last century. In 1870 Ritcher wrote: 'It may still happen,
634 that the head of a Coorg house on his dying bed will solemnly charge his sons to seek vengeance on his personal enemies, a bequest which occasions calamitous feuds between succeeding generations.'[1] A feud between *okkas* was called *kuḍupi*, while a feud between villages or between *nāḍs* was called *maradalé*. It is likely that feuds between *okkas* in the same village were extremely rare as the village was too compact a unit to permit of feuds within it. But the same cannot be said of villages within the same *nāḍ*. The annual dance, at the harvest festival, for all the villages of Ballatnāḍ, is nowadays attended only by Pērūr, and this is attributed to the former prevalence of feuds between the various villages composing this *nāḍ*.

628 Formerly feuds between *nāḍs* were very common, and folklore
634 bears ample testimony to this fact. There was a long feud between
539 Bēngunāḍ and Ballatnāḍ in the course of which they conducted raids on each other. A hero called Appaṇṇa, who later came to be famous as Kappaṇṇa or 'robber', was born in Ballatnāḍ, and when he was born all the people of Bēngunāḍ suffered from headache. Later he raided the Povvedi temple in Bēngūr, and robbed it of the two wooden pins (*kilu*) with which the temple's see-saw (*rāṭé*) was fixed to two wooden posts. Pilgrims used to sit on the see-saw at the periodical festival of Povvedi of Bēngūr.

The robbing of the wooden pins belonging to the Bēngūr Povvedi temple was a triumph for Balmāvṭi. The latter had a see-saw made and used it at the biennial festival of the Povvedi of Balmāvṭi. At the beginning of the festival of Povvedi of Balmāvṭi there is a rite at which a festival-priest enumerates the restrictions which have to be observed during the festival period, and one of these restrictions states that no one from Bēngūr may approach

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[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 126.

the sacred see-saw. Several years ago my friend Shri Paṭṭamāḍa 628
Ponnappa of Bēngūr was asked, during the bienniel festival, not to 634
touch the see-saw. 539

The entire atmosphere of Coorg folklore is martial: secret raids, 538
fights, heroes, and intrigues are the stuff out of which a folksong is 628
made. The bards delight when a hero is born in their *nāḍ*. They 634
describe the event with gusto. There is a storm, the earth trembles, and the men in the hostile *nāḍ* suffer from headache. On the other hand, the bards wail with self-pity when their *nāḍ* suffers a defeat in a fight. The men of the *nāḍ* go on pilgrimage to their patron-deity and pray to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

In a fight between two *nāḍs*, the temples belonging to either side 634
were commonly attacked. In fact, a temple constituted the most 628
sensitive part of a *nāḍ*. The prevention of the offer of worship to the deity of another *nāḍ* inflicted a very deep humiliation on the latter; and the stealing of the property of the temple of another *nāḍ* was as bad. In a struggle between two *nāḍs* which centred round their temples, the deity of the triumphant *nāḍ* was regarded as having triumphed over the deity of the defeated *nāḍ*. A devotee of the deity of a *nāḍ* was also a patriot of that *nāḍ*. He had to take up arms to ensure the continuance of the offer of worship at the temple of his *nāḍ* or village, and to see that raiders did not succeed in carrying away the property of the temple.

Patriotism for one's *nāḍ* was widespread and deep, and even women and children were imbued with it. Women were in an unfortunate position as they were torn between their love for their natal *nāḍ* and their duty towards their conjugal *nāḍ*. There are instances of women working for their natal *nāḍ* against their conjugal *nāḍ* when the two were at feud with each other.

The widespread prevalence of feuds did have one important structural consequence. They very effectively counteracted the tendency of caste to stress the horizontal ties at the expense of the vertical ties. But with the conquest of Coorg by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas and the decrease of feuds, the horizontal emphasis of caste increased. Thus wider political integration strengthened caste.

III

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(1) THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF *MANGALA*

I

182 788 EVERY society has a body of ritual, and certain ritual acts forming part of the body of ritual repeat themselves constantly. Not only ritual acts, but also ritual complexes, which are wholes made up of several individual ritual acts, frequently repeat themselves. Several such ritual complexes and some individual ritual acts might be together knit into a still wider ritual whole which repeats itself occasionally.

576 Salutation is an individual ritual act. It might be of two kinds, either elaborate as that adopted by a young person towards an elder on a ritual occasion, or simple, like that prevailing between two equals. In the former case the younger person thrice touches the older man's feet with both hands, and after each touch he takes the hands to his forehead where he brings them together. In the simpler form of salutation which prevails between equals, each person folds the palms before his chest, and as he does this he moves his head slightly to indicate a bow. The folding of the palms and bowing of the head are the most important parts of the ritual act of salutation.

Salutation of the elaborate kind is only one of several ritual acts in the ritual complex of *mūrta* (*vide infra*), and *mūrta* is again part of *mangala*. Formerly there were several kinds of *mangalas* and the narrowing down of *mangala* to mean marriage exclusively is a fairly recent phenomenon.

881 Formerly *mangala* was performed to mark the attainment of
social adulthood by a boy when his ears were ritually bored by the
[304] goldsmith. This *mangala*, the first to be performed for a boy, was
called *kemmi kutti mangala*, or 'the *mangala* at which the ears are
[301] bored'. The wearing of ear-rings was symbolical of the attainment
of social adulthood. One who was physiologically an adult, but
who had not undergone the ear-boring *mangala*, did not count as
an adult for ritual and social purposes.

The counterpart of the ear-boring *mangala* for a girl was the 881
mangala performed when she attained puberty. This was called
'*polé kaṇḍa mangala*' or '*mangala* performed on the sighting of 841
defilement'. The menstrual flow was regarded as defiling, and
formerly a woman observed seclusion for three days during her
periods. *Mangala* was also performed when a woman became 843
pregnant for the first time (*kuḷiyammé mangala*). A woman who
had given birth to ten children, all of whom were alive, was entitled
to a form of *mangala* known as *paitānḍek aḷapa*.

A man who killed a panther or tiger had the right to *nari mangala* 555
or 'tiger *mangala*' being performed in his honour. Marriage [589]
increased a man's status, and a bachelor was regarded as socially
and ritually inferior to a married man. *Mangala* was performed to [564]
a bachelor's corpse before burying or cremating it, presumably in
order to raise the status of the soul of the dead bachelor.

A man who had lost two wives in succession was ritually married 588
to a plantain tree before marrying his third wife. The marriage to 777
the plantain tree was called '*bāḷek mangala*', or 'plantain *mangala*',
and the tree was cut down soon after the *mangala*.

The number three, in certain contexts, is considered very unlucky everywhere in south India. When a man has lost his first two wives in succession, and intends marrying again, the third wife is considered certain to share the fate of the first two. The performance of '*bāḷek mangala*' and the cutting down of the tree soon after frees the human wife from the fate which would have otherwise overtaken her.

Formerly when a man built a new house he performed '*mané* 742
mangala' or 'house *mangala*'. *Mangala* was performed for the head
of the house on this occasion. Another form of *mangala* which has
entirely disappeared now is '*ettu mangala*' or 'ox *mangala*'.

The ideal and usual marriage in Coorg is for a virgin to marry a 582
bachelor and this is called '*kanni mangala*' or 'virgin *mangala*'. The 585
marriage rites are fullest when a virgin marries a bachelor, and
they are abbreviated to some extent when a widower marries a
virgin. They are still further abbreviated when a widow marries a
widower, and many old Coorgs would even refuse to accord to
such a marriage the name of *mangala*.

The ritual that is performed at the 'marriage of a virgin' may be 585
divided into two parts, one which might be called the *mangala* part,
and the other the non-*mangala* part. The *mangala*-part of marriage

585 is considered in this chapter while the non-*mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and
788 at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.'[1] (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.'[2] (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'[3]

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala*' as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

II

796 The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of
[781] *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the
performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*.
[805] It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt
form of the Sanskrit *mūhurta*, which means a 'particular division
of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.[4]

The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned,
796 and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of
346 five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is
erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

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[1] *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd edition), p. 235.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.

[4] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 825.

Four Coorgs beat the small Coorg drum called '*duḍi*' and sing 796 some traditional songs at various points during *mangala*. These [533] songs give an account of the ritual that is being performed. The singers also sing the 'road song' (*baṭṭé pāṭ*), while conducting the subject of *mangala* from one part of the house to another, and the road song gives a traditionally exaggerated account of everything that is found *en route*. At night, after dinner, Coorg singers sing songs about the groom, bride, their ancestors, and the guests who are present.

The elaborate preparations for *mangala* and the selection of an auspicious day for its performance stress the social importance of the occasion. *Mangala* indicates the movement of the subject from one position in the social structure to another, it marks a change in his social personality. *Mūrta* ritual is the most important part of *mangala*, and, consequently, it is performed during the most auspicious part of the auspicious day, and the subject undergoes a series of preparatory and purificatory rites before sitting down for *mūrta*.

The subject of *mangala*, if male, is ritually shaved by the barber, [783] after which he is given a bath by three women relatives whose [589] husbands are alive.[1] Women whose husbands are alive enjoy a higher ritual and social status than widows. Only an unmarried girl, and a woman whose first and only husband is alive, are entitled to take part in auspicious ritual. Not only widows, but also remarried widows, are excluded from auspicious ritual, but such exclusion is not as thorough among Coorgs as it is, for instance, among the Brahmins.

After a bath, the subject wears ritual garments, and proceeds to [346] the sacred central hall (*nellakki naḍubāḍé*), where all ritual ought to take place, ideally speaking. In the central hall is the sacred [778] tripod stool (*mukkāli* = three-legged) on which the subject sits, and on either side of the stool stands a bell-metal lamp (*kuttum boḷicha*). The subject thrice walks round the tripod stool and lamps, and then salutes the lamps and the tripod stool before sitting down on the latter. Circumambulation is clock-wise in auspicious ritual and anti-clockwise in mourning.

In front of the sitting subject is another such stool covered with a red silk cloth. An earthen lamp burns in a metal dining dish (*taḷi*)

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[1] The subject sits on the floor fully clothed while the women relatives pour vesselfuls of hot water on him.

796 which is kept on the stool before the subject. The lamp rests on a thin bed of rice spread inside the dish. A few betel leaves and areca-nuts are also kept alongside the lamp. The dish, rice, lamp, and betel leaves and nuts are all collectively referred to as '*taḷiyakkiboḷuk*' which literally means 'dish-rice-lamp'. It will be referred to as 'dish-lamp' in future, and a dish-lamp is considered essential on all ritual occasions.

At *mangala*, in addition to the earthen lamp, a *kinḍi* full of milk [415] is kept on the dish-lamp. A *kinḍi* is a bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side. At *mangala* every relative performs *vis-à-vis* the subject a series of solidarity rites collectively called *mūrta*, and one of these rites consists in giving the subject a little milk to drink. This is done by the relative holding the *kinḍi* in such a way that the tip of the spout touches the subject's mouth. The subject sucks in a few drops of milk through the spout.

Each of the assembled relatives singly performs *mūrta*, described below, towards the subject of *mangala*. Three married women, close relatives of the subject, are required to perform it before anyone else. If the subject's mother is alive and not a widow, she is entitled to be one of the three, and what is more, perform it first, even if the other two are her seniors.

The mother, or senior married woman, begins by sprinkling rice on the two bell-metal lamps on either side of the subject, and then salutes them. The sun-god is saluted next after throwing some rice backwards, over the shoulders. This is followed by the relative depositing a little rice successively at the joints of knees, elbows, and shoulders, and on the head of the subject. The relative then holds the spouted vessel before the subject and he sucks in a little milk through the spout. After this she presents the subject with a gold or silver coin. The subject salutes her by touching her feet with both his hands and carrying the latter back to his fore- [788] head. This is done thrice. The married woman blesses him by touching his head and saying, 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'.

III

796 It has been mentioned before that *mangala* is an auspicious or 777 good-sacred ceremony and that it has to be performed on an auspicious day. All over India, among Hindus, it is believed that certain

periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' 796
is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as inclusive 777
of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspiciousness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *panchānga* which may 796
be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Panchāngas* are 777
nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a 805
Coorg house to have a *panchānga*. It is frequently referred to as it gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur, and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu 787
theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to [815]
Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events
like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes 805
from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes, and they are all mentioned in the *panchānga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the [777]
more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more
does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is [779]
Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to the whole of India.

IV

Mangala has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but 796
also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in 778
his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he
has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins, 783
Okkaligas, and Gauḍas may enter all parts of the ancestral house. Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washermen (Maḍivāḷa), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, however, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

796 occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house
778 is purified after their departure.

783 The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better
[841] preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within
it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and
defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it
from normal participation in social life.

841 Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālé poré* in which
a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained
normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath.
During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects
in a condition of normal ritual status.

761 The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and
783 the members of the particular household. After the corpse is
removed, both the house and the members of the household have
to be purified.

Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the
778 others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the
788 central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp.
The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end
of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the
oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and
[823] the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This
lamp is called *nellakki boḷuk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every
morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after
lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a
[354] common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tūg boḷuk* or hanging
lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa
considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred
of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbaré kōṇé*) and the kitchen
(*umbaḷa mané*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The
south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular
778 house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-
769 propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen
is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure
place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do
not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food

to dead ancestors, which are made in every Coorg house, are made 778
in the kitchen alone instead of in the ancestor-shrine or anywhere 769
else.

There are two types of houses in Coorg, one which has an open 342
quadrangle in the middle and the other in which there is no such 778
open quadrangle. In the former type, the four corners of the open quadrangle are supported by four pillars, and four planks (*aimaras*) connect the four pillars at a height of about 2½ feet from the ground. These planks are regarded as sacred: none may step across them, and no woman may sit on one of them.

Planks are affixed to the top of the parapet wall in the veranda. [769]
One of these planks is called the 'ancestors' plank' (*kāraṇavaṇda aimara*), and it is regarded as sacred. None may sleep on it. I have heard that anyone sleeping on the 'ancestors' plank' in the house of the Karavanḍa *okka* is thrown down to the floor by the spirits of the ancestors.

Women very rarely visit the veranda (*kaiyālé*), and when they [562]
visit it they may not sit on one of the planks there. Nor are they [888]
allowed to sit on the planks in the central hall, though very old
women occasionally take the liberty of doing so when the senior
males are away. On the second day of marriage the bride sits on a [585]
plank in the veranda of the groom's house, and this is part of the
ritual of admitting her into her husband's house.

At some distance from the main building is a shrine (*kaimaḍa*) 778
devoted to the worship of the ancestors. During the periodical 769
ancestor-propitiations (*kāraṇava téré*), small figurines representing the ancestors are kept in the shrine and worshipped. During festivals, a lamp is lit in the shrine, and cooked food is placed before the lamp.

Kaimaḍas or ancestor-shrines seem to be a recent phenomenon, and before they became popular the dead ancestors were represented by unhewn stones fixed in earthen platforms which were built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. These platforms were called '*kāraṇava taré*' or 'ancestors' platform'. Even today in Kiggaṭnāḍ there are only ancestor-platforms and no ancestor-*shrines*.

Like the ancestors, cobra-deities are represented by unhewn 776
stones[1] and fixed in platforms built round the trunks of milk- 778
exuding trees. The vegetation growing near a cobra-platform is

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[1] Minor deities like Pūda and Guḷika are also represented by similar stones, and occasionally found alongside stones representing cobra-deities.

776 considered sacred, and it is not permitted to cut it down. A woman
778 in her periods is not allowed to go near the platform as cobra-deities are considered to be specially sensitive to defilement. If this rule is not respected, she, and probably the *okka* of which she is a member, will suffer misfortune. The cobra is a sacred creature and he who kills it will suffer from a skin disease like leucoderma.

243 There is an attitude of ritual respect towards the ancestral rice-
778 field. This is specially noticeable when the crop is standing: a man may not wear sandals while walking through it, or hold an umbrella over his head, or whistle.

The rice-field is divided into a number of ridged-up plots and the central plot of the rice-field is regarded as particularly sacred.
[846] Formerly it was the custom to bury the umbilical cord of the eldest son in the central plot. A man is supposed to have a special affinity to the place where his umbilical cord is buried. If a Coorg boy is found going to a particular place frequently, his elders twit him,
[871] 'Is your umbilical cord buried there?' Nowadays the umbilical cord is buried in the yard of the palace of Mercara, or in a school-compound, because Coorgs want their sons to do well in examinations and become high government officials.

764 A part of the ancestral estate is used for burying or cremating the
778 dead members of the *okka*. The part where corpses are buried is called *kēkaḷa* while the adjoining part used for cremation is called *tūṭangaḷa*.[1] It is sacred, but in an undesirable way: the term 'bad-sacred' has been used to denote such a ritual condition. (Bad-sacredness includes within itself both 'defilement and 'inauspi-
[783] ciousness'.) A visit to the burial-ground defiles a person and a bath is necessary to restore him to normal ritual status.

764 The burial-ground for children may be near the house, whereas
775 that for adults must be as far away as possible. The ghosts of adults
[858] are harmful, while children's ghosts are comparatively harmless. An adult has a social personality, whereas a child does not have one. An adult occupies a social role or several social roles. The ghost of a headman or hero or a particularly evil man is more powerful than
[765] that of an ordinary man. The mourning-period also varies according to age and social importance of the deceased.

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[1] Amongst Coorgs, the corpses of elders and important people are cremated,
[564] while the corpses of children and unimportant people are buried. The Brahmins, however, cremate all dead persons except infants, and in many parts of south India castes which want to rise in status give up burial for cremation.

V

It is not only places which have ritual value, but also points of 823
the compass. East is a sacred direction because the sun rises there, 776
and Hindus in all parts of India regard the sun as a deity.

The ancestral house faces east and so does the ancestor-shrine. [342]
The lip of the sacred wall-lamp in the central hall faces east. The subject of a *mangala* ceremony sits facing east.

On getting up from his bed in the morning a Coorg salutes the [782]
wall-lamp and the sun. The cultivation of rice is accompanied by [243]
ritual at every stage, and on all these ritual occasions the subject of the rites begins by saluting the sun.

South is an inauspicious or bad-sacred direction. A corpse is [764]
buried or cremated with its head towards south. In Sanskritic Hinduism, south is the abode of Yama, the god of death.

Coorgs, like Hindus in other parts of India, regard east as a good-sacred direction and south as a bad-sacred direction. East is associated with Chūriya (sun-god), and south with Yama. Both these deities have an All-India spread. Coorgs worship these two deities along with other Hindus all over India. The possession of [184]
common values binds people together and Coorgs form a single community with Hindus all over India when they worship the same deities.

VI

Mūrta is the crucial part of *mangala*, and the rites performed 796
prior to *mūrta* prepare the subject for it. The subject is shaved by 305
the barber, given a bath by three married women, and dressed in 292
ritual robes and ornaments before sitting down to *mūrta*. Shaving, the first of several preparatory rites, will be briefly considered here.

It is necessary to repeat here that shaving is done by barbers [584]
who form a caste. Contact with the barber defiles a member of a [783]
higher caste, and consequently shaving is invariably followed by a purificatory bath.

The subject of *mangala* wears a white cotton *kupya* while he is being shaved by the barber. The *kupya* is like a dressing-gown, and it is either black or white. The white gown is of cotton, has long sleeves, and covers the neck up to the throat. This is the traditional ritual dress of Coorgs. The black gown is a Westernized version of

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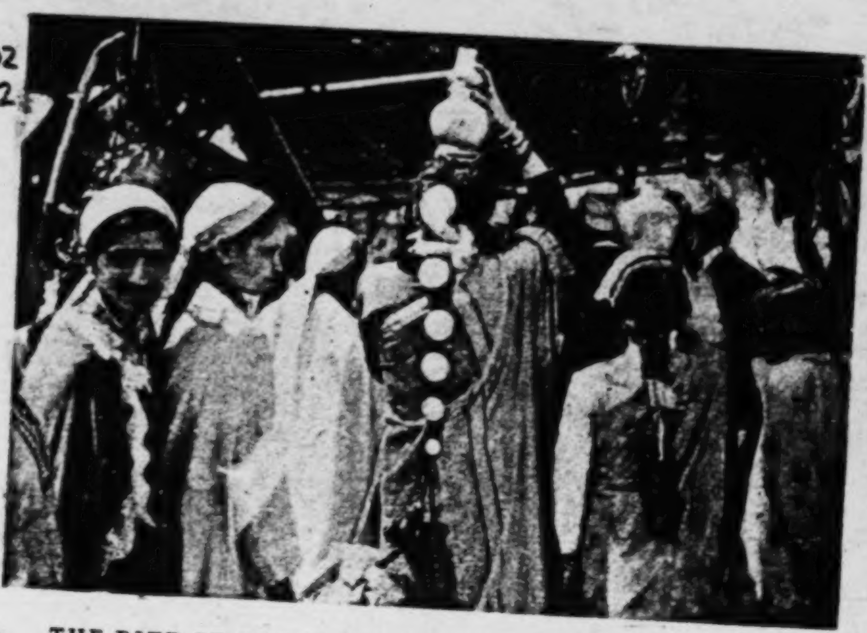
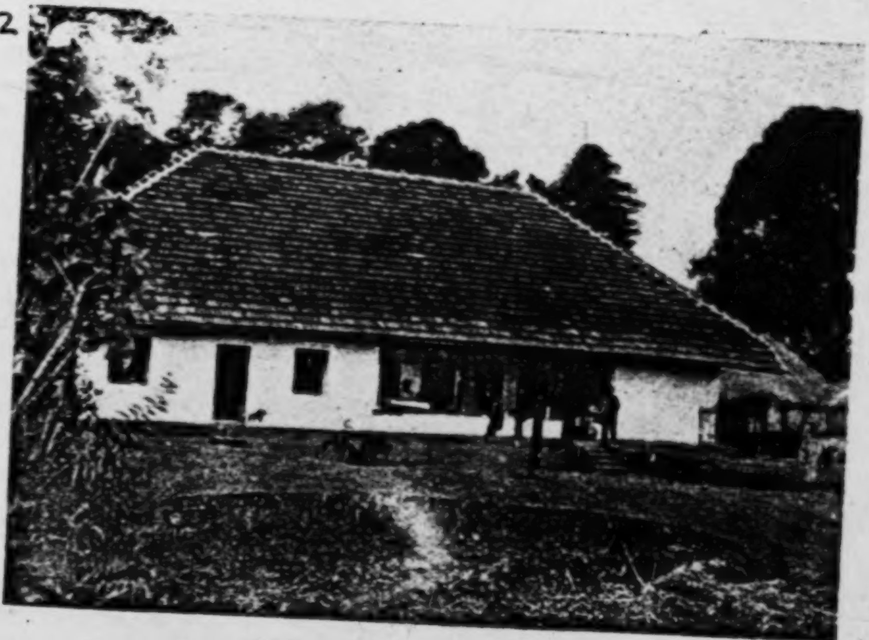


THE RITE OF THE BRIDE CARRYING WATER INTO THE GROOM'S HOUSE

342



A COORG HOUSE, RECENTLY BUILT

[Facing p. 80]

796 the white original: it is of wool, has short sleeves, and a V-shaped
305 neck permitting the display of a collar and tie. The white gown is
292 ritually superior to the black gown.

Usually the gown is secured at the waist by a tasselled red silk sash called *chēlé*, but when the subject is sitting for the shaving rite, a red cotton scarf is used instead of the silk sash.

The subject salutes the lamp in the south-western room, the south-western pillar, and the wall-lamp before sitting on the tripod stool placed on a mat. Near the mat is a dining-dish (*taḷi*) containing milk, and a harvest-basket containing some rice, a coconut, a bunch of plantains, and betel leaves and areca-nut.

Water may not be used for shaving on this occasion. Milk is used instead. The shavings are put into the dining-dish, and later the barber empties the dish at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

A distinctive form of shaving prevails at marriage, and perhaps at subsequent *mangalas* (it does not, however, prevail at the ear-boring *mangala*). The front of the head is shaved in such a manner
[302] that it leaves two 'horns' above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This mode of shaving is called '*kombanjavara*' which means 'horn shave'.

The harvest-basket containing rice, plantains, and the bell-metal dining-dish, and the scarf at the subject's waist, are given as gifts to the barber.

585 Two other men get themselves shaved after the subject. All over
305 south India it is common at a wedding for two or four companions of the subject to 'accompany' him (or her) in certain rites. For instance, two men are given a bath along with the groom, and two girls are given a bath along with the bride.

In the south-western parts of Coorg the bride undergoes, before *mūrta*, a rite called '*kūrangodi muripa*', which is analogous to shaving. The bride's brother's wife removes from the bride's head a thin wisp of hair, and pares her nails. (The barber normally pares the nails after shaving a man.) These are put into a dining-dish containing milk. Later, the dining-dish is emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

302 Coorgs are generally more Westernized in their ways than others
177 in Coorg, and there are more cropped heads among them than among others. But formerly they, like other Hindus, had their entire heads shaved but for a tuft of hair at the crown. Tufts started giving place to cropped heads towards the close of the last

302 century. The exclusive shaving of the face as distinct from the
177 shaving of the face along with the head also came into vogue at the same time, and moustaches, which were only removed at the death of a very close relative, began to disappear entirely.

302 Marriage conferred on a man the right to have his head shaved
589 periodically, and a bachelor was not entitled to it unless he had
881 undergone the ear-boring *mangala*. The latter ritual conferred social adulthood on a male: in the folksong about the hero Kaiyandira Appayya it is seen that he successfully claims to be an adult on the strength of the fact that his friends, all boys tending cattle, performed this ritual for him in the jungle.

884 The ear-boring *mangala* has now entirely disappeared, and I
304 learn that even fifty years ago it was only performed very rarely, and that, too, as a votive offering to a deity. But though the ritual
[301] had disappeared the concepts associated with it continued to exist for some time afterwards. It was considered improper for an adult
[764] to be without ear-rings, and such men were not admitted to the temple of Iggutappa in Nālknāḍ. If a Coorg died without his ears being bored, the corpse's ears were pierced before burial.

[302] The ear-boring *mangala* was the first of several *mangalas* for a male, and the head was shaved for the first time on this occasion. The performance of this *mangala* conferred certain privileges on the individual in question, one of which being that he could have his face shaved periodically by a barber.

783 At the various *mangalas* shaving is a preparatory ritual act. On
302 these occasions it is followed by a bath and by the wearing of ritually pure robes. These preliminary rites make the subject pure, and while in this condition he performs certain rites, or others perform certain rites towards him.

765 The form of shaving prevalent normally is different from that
302 prevalent at mourning. Normally the tuft at the crown and the moustache have to be left untouched at shaving, while at mourning it is obligatory, at any rate for the chief male mourners, to have their heads and faces shaved entirely. Other close relatives who are junior to the dead person are recommended to follow the example of the chief mourners, but it does not seem to be obligatory for them. The mourners get themselves shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse; and this shave marks the beginning of ritual mourning. The mourners may not have another shave while ritual mourning lasts. In the case of the eldest son and

765 302 widower, ritual mourning lasts sometimes six months, and during this entire period shaving is forbidden.

765 182 The restriction on shaving is only one of several restrictions imposed on the mourners, and in order to understand its meaning completely all the restrictions have to be taken into consideration. The mourners are forbidden to consume meat, honey, betel leaves and areca-nut, mushrooms, and liquor. They may not go to a temple, or wedding, or dance. They have to wear mourning dress, and they have to perform certain ritual. It is necessary to emphasize that these restrictions have to be observed. They show to the outside world that the mourner is 'concerned' in the death that has occurred.

There are degrees of 'concern': the close relatives have to show greater concern than distant kindred. The mourning period is longer for them, and they are marked off from the others in other ways too. The obligatory expression of concern in the culturally defined manner serves to maintain a certain kinship and social structure.

VII

783 [343] The preparatory, purificatory ritual act which comes after shaving is a ritual bath. It is usual for three[1] married women to give this ritual bath to the subject. The *guḍḍa* or bathroom is a room outside the main building of the ancestral house, and the subject [533] marches in state to it. The procession is headed by pipers and drummers followed by four Coorgs beating a tiny drum and singing the traditional 'road song'. At a wedding, after the groom [585] returns in state from his bath, the best man[2] helps to dress him in ritual robes and ornaments.

[515] A Coorg washes his hands, feet, and face before saluting the sacred wall-lamp every day, morning and evening; and on festival days he takes a bath and changes into clothes washed by the washerman. Both bath and change of clothes are preliminary to prayer.

It is usual to approximate physical impurity to ritual impurity.

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[777] [1] Odd numbers have ritual value in Coorg as elsewhere in south India. Number '3' is specially sacred. A person usually walks thrice round a sacred object like a tripod stool, temple, and funeral pyre.

[2] The best man (*bōjakāra*) is a married man, and the bride has a matron of honour (*bōjakarati*).

An unwashed state is an impure state, and taking a bath and changing 783 into clean clothes alter the ritual status of the subject. While this is generally true we must, however, guard ourselves against completely identifying physical purity or cleanliness with ritual purity. It is not every bath that changes the ritual status of the subject.

A ritual bath alters the subject's ritual status. It adds to his ritual purity and makes him fit to pray, or to be possessed by a deity. But sometimes the emphasis is on the bath terminating a condition of ritual impurity. That is to say, instead of a bath adding purity to normal ritual status, it might only be putting an end to ritual impurity, which is a condition inferior to normal ritual status. For instance, a mother is ritually impure for fifty-nine days after 846 the birth of her child. On the twelfth day, however, she attains 783 partial purity after a bath and this enables her to enter the central [553] hall and kitchen but not the south-western room. The child is ritually given a name on the twelfth day.

But complete purity is only attained on the sixtieth day when a ceremony called *aruvud* (literally, the sixtieth) is performed. The mother has a bath, changes her clothes, marks her forehead with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes,[1] and then performs certain rites.

The important point to note here is that on both the twelfth and the sixtieth days a bath marks the termination of ritual impurity. It is also preliminary to the performance of certain rites.

That a ritual bath is different from an ordinary bath is made clear from the fact that the confined mother has an elaborate massage and bath every day, beginning with the day the baby is born. The massage and bath last several hours, but their object is therapeutic and not ritual. It is only on the twelfth and sixtieth days that a bath alters the ritual condition of the mother.[2] All baths clean the body, but only some purify as well as clean.

Greater ritual purity or merit ensues from a cold-water bath than 783 from a hot-water bath. If the subject takes a cold-water bath while 765 wearing his ritual robes, even greater ritual merit is acquired. Thus

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[1] All over south India devotees of the god Shiva mark their foreheads every [302] morning with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes.

[2] Orthodox Brahmins frequently keep a cloth which they dip in water and squeeze dry and tie round their waists while performing certain rites. This cloth is frequently not very clean, whereas a snow-white *dhoti* brought by the washerman is ritually impure.

765 783 mourners are required to perform certain rites while their clothes are wet and dripping.

On the twelfth or sixteenth day of the death of a person the ceremony of *māda* is performed and this puts an end to ritual mourning for all except the first-grade mourners. Until the performance of *māda*, the mourners offer food every day to the spirit of the dead person. When making these offerings they are required frequently to take a plunge in a well or pond with their clothes on. But this is not a pleasant thing to do, and especially so in the wet and cold seasons, and consequently, after the first plunge for the day, the mourners content themselves by washing their hands and feet, and wetting a corner of their waist-cloths. This is regarded as sufficient to meet the ends of ritual purity. Such a traditionally sanctioned mechanism makes ritual simpler and less inconvenient to the persons concerned.

The widower (or widow) and eldest son go, after the mourning period is over, to Bhāgamanḍla where the rivers Kāvēri and Kanaké meet. After a shave, they bathe in the confluence of the two rivers, and then offer balls of rice-flour to the dead person's spirit. This is followed by a visit to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara [778] where the mourners offer worship. Subsequently they go to the source of the River Kāvēri, bathe in the larger spring, worship the smaller spring, and then return home.

783 Two ideas can be distinguished in the above ritual acts: (1) a ritual bath alters the ritual status of the subject; and (2) bathing in a sacred river is not only purifying in a ritual sense, but also 184 removes the sins of the bather. This latter idea is shared by Hindus all over India, and when a Coorg bathes in the Kāvēri he participates in a ritual idiom that spreads all over India. The Kāvēri is a sacred river for Hindus in every part of south India, and it is even called the '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or the Southern Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges, or in any other sacred river, rids a person of the sins he [782] has committed both in this and in a previous existence. It confers on him spiritual merit (*puṇya*).

[779] Sanskritic Hinduism has incorporated into itself the idea that bathing changes the ritual status of the bather, and has elaborated it in such a manner that pious Hindus believe in the sin-cleansing and merit-conferring powers of sacred rivers.

846 On the seventh or twelfth day after the birth of a child in a Coorg house, the washerman comes with a vessel full of water in which

couḷu or salt-impregnated earth[1] has been dissolved. With the aid 846
of a few mango leaves he sprinkles the solution all over the house and this act rids the house of its impurity and restores it to normal ritual status. Nowadays, however, Coorgs increasingly call on a Brahmin to purify the house on the twelfth day.

It is probable the washerman was employed as purifier because 296
of his occupation. But such a duty is not consistent with the posi- [564]
tion he normally occupies in the caste hierarchy. For instance, he is prohibited from entering the more sacred parts of an ancestral house, like the kitchen and central hall, as he defiles them by his presence. If, however, he has to enter them in the exercise of his duties—at marriage he covers the ceiling of the central hall with clean white sheets—they are purified subsequently. But no such [177]
inconsistency exists in the case of the Brahmin, and the increasing tendency to employ him is part of the general process of Sanskritization of Coorg customs.

VIII

After having been given a bath by three married women, the 585
groom is helped into his ritual robes and ornaments by the best 292
man. He has to wear a white cotton gown for the *mūrta*, and this is worn in such a way that the right side comes over the left side. A red silk sash secures the gown at the waist. The ornamental [293]
Coorg knife, *pīché katti*, is tucked into the sash in front, and the broad Coorg sword, *oḍi katti*, hangs from its clasp at the groom's back. The clasp is fixed to a chain which is tied round the groom's waist. The groom also wears a number of ornaments.

The groom wears the Coorg turban (*pāni manḍé tuṇi*) which is flat at the top and also covers the back of the head. He may not [783]
wear any sandals, however, as leather defiles. He carries in his hand a staff (*gejjé tanḍ*) with small bells tied to it near the top.

The bride wears a uniform of red silk: a red silk *sari*, a red silk full-sleeved Coorg blouse (*kaḷa kupya*), and a red silk scarf which is tied round her head. She wears bangles, necklaces, ear-rings, and [301]
also ornaments on her ankles, feet, and toes.

The best man and matron of honour hold a white cloth umbrella over the groom and bride respectively.[2]

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[1] The washerman uses *couḷu* for washing clothes.

[2] Round about Mercara the bride and groom both wear a red silk veil during *mūrta*. In the southernmost part of Coorg, however, the veil is not worn by

585 Nowadays, the black, woollen, half-sleeved gown is coming into
fashion. Every Coorg who can afford it sports it at festivals, dances,
292 and weddings. It has become a mark of wealth and status, and the
[556] white cotton gown which has superior ritual status is becoming
almost a symbol of poverty. But even now the subject of a *mangala*, as distinct from others who are not as important, wears a white gown. Any suggestion that he should discard the white gown in favour of the black would meet with opposition from one and all. It may be mentioned here that the hero Kaiyandira Appayya, to whom reference has already been made, was prohibited from doing a number of things which an ordinary Coorg did, such as handling a plough, eating bamboo shoots, and wearing a black gown. He was required to wear a white gown always.

292 The corpse, which is in some respects treated as similar to the
765 subject of a *mangala*, is dressed in a white gown, but with the
[764] underside on top if it is going to be cremated, and with the left
side over the right if it is going to be buried.

Formerly, mourners also wore the white gown, but in a particular way: the right hand did not pass through the right arm of the gown, but instead it was allowed to hang limp from the right shoulder. The gown was secured at the waist by a black sash instead of a red one.

The white gown is worn on all important ritual occasions. Ritual occasions are either auspicious or inauspicious, and there is need to differentiate between them. Hence, though the subject of *mangala*, corpse and mourner, are all dressed in a white gown, the mode of wearing it is different in each case. The subject of *mangala* wears it in the normal way, while in the case of a corpse it is reversed, and in the case of the mourner the right arm drops loosely from the shoulder.

Nowadays, however, all active mourners wear a white waist-cloth (*munḍu*) and shoulder-cloth (*tunḍu*). In the case of women mourners, two of the four corners of the shoulder-cloth are tied in a knot in front in such a way that the breasts are covered. A waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth are normally the ritual dress of Hindus in Malabar.

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either party. Between Mercara and the Wynāḍ border, in Kiggaṭnāḍ, only the bride wears a veil, and the groom removes her veil prior to consummating the marriage on the second night. The veil is generally uncommon among Hindus in south India and is worn only by the women of the ruling castes. It is likely that the women of the royal families in pre-British Coorg wore the veil regularly.

Red colour seems to have greater ritual value than white, and 822
silk greater ritual value than cotton. For instance, at a wedding, 585
the ceiling of the sacred central hall is covered with white cloths, 778
except for the part just above the bridal seat which is covered with
red cloths. All the bride's clothes are of red silk, and according to
the ancient marriage song the groom wore a red silk gown and red
silk turban.

When a man (or woman) dies his relatives have to carry gifts 764
of white cotton cloths to him. But the dead man's sisters' children, 822
or dead woman's brothers' children, have to carry gifts of red silk 778
cloths. Those who bring gifts of red silk cloths are considered to be
closer relatives than those who bring white cotton cloths. It is
those who bring red silk cloths who take part, along with the dead
man's eldest son and widow, in the important pot-breaking rite
(*koḍa kukkuva*) which ritually severs the dead man's connexion
with his living relatives.

The ritual preference of silk to cotton is widespread all over 778
peninsular India among Brahmins, and it is very likely that Coorgs 171
borrowed the use of red silk from the Brahmins of the west coast.
The use of red silk in ritual is not very clearly defined—at least it
is not as clearly defined as the use of the white gown.

The turban is worn on very important auspicious occasions like 291
a wedding. On less formal occasions a Coorg ties a scarf round his 576
head. Both men and women tie a scarf round their heads out of
doors. But no form of head-dress, turban, scarf, or cap, is worn 764
inside the house. When a kinswoman comes into the house the
hostess removes her scarf. Failure to do so would be an insult, as it
would amount to treating the kinswoman as a stranger. Absence
of head-dress indicates the intimacy that prevails among the members
of a household. It is presumably for this reason that everyone,
including the senior mourners, has to remove his scarf and
sandals before the corpse. Such removal shows that the dead man
and mourners are members of one household. They are kindred, [602]
and kinship is intimacy. When two people are able to appear before
each other without scarves they are intimate, they are members of
the same household. It is an expression of the solidarity prevalent
between the two.

There is a great social and ritual elaboration of the distinction 589
between a married woman and a widow. A married woman or
garati is one whose first and only husband is alive. Remarried

589 widows and divorcées have a slightly higher status than widows, but this does not entitle them to be classed as *garatis*.

589 292 [764] The Coorg widow's dress consists of a white cotton *sari*, a white cotton blouse, and a white cotton scarf. *None* of these clothes may have a coloured border. The corpse of a widow, too, is dressed in clothes without a coloured border. The corpse of a married woman, on the other hand, is dressed in a coloured *sari* with a coloured, or silver, or gold, border.

[171] The distinction between a widow and married woman is absolutely fundamental in every part of south India. Married women have a great number of privileges, whereas widows have a great number of ritual disabilities. A married woman is auspicious, she is everywhere welcome, whereas a widow is inauspicious, and she is unwelcome everywhere. This deep cleavage expresses itself in the matter of dress also.

IX

782 778 354 After being dressed in ritual robes, the subject of *mangala* salutes the various lamps in the house before sitting down for *mūrta*. On either side of him is a dish-lamp placed on a tripod stool. The dish-lamp is indispensable on every ritual occasion.

Every day, early in the morning and again just before nightfall, the housewife sweeps the house and sprinkles it with a purifying solution of cow-dung. She then lights the wall-lamp and salutes it. While saluting it she prays to the ancestors of the *okka*, to Mother Kāvēri and Shiva. Every member of the *okka* salutes the wall-lamp after getting up in the morning, and again at night.

[821] The ending of night as well as of day is marked by sweeping and purifying the house, and by lighting and saluting the wall-lamp. The period between the ending of the day and the beginning of night is regarded as a critical time, and children are not given food or allowed to sleep at that time. This is a common south Indian custom.

[787] It is regarded as a bad omen if the lamp goes out while a Coorg is having his dinner. The sudden extinction of the lamp indicates the approach of disaster. The diner gets up from his meal, cleans the dish and washes his hands. He sits down to dinner again a few minutes later. This makes it a different meal altogether and not the one that was interrupted.

A Coorg never says that a lamp has gone out. He says instead, 784
'the lamp is brighter' (*boḷicha dumb pōchi*). This kind of euphemism 354
is employed on other occasions also: the Koḍagi word for a tiger is
'*nari*' which means a jackal in every other Dravidian language.

Again, no Coorg says that 'a cobra has bitten So-and-so'. He
says instead, 'a creeper has bitten So-and-so'. Finally, after nightfall
no one mentions the barber. If they have to refer to him they say
instead, 'the scraper of heads'. Amongst the Hindus in Mysore the
barber is referred to after nightfall as 'one whose name may not be
mentioned'. A barber is inauspicious, and contact with him is [305]
defiling. He is also associated with inauspicious occasions such as
death, as mourners have to be shaved. Women specially dread the
barber, as until recently among the highest castes widows were
required to have their heads shaved entirely.

In every one of the cases we have mentioned circumlocution is
employed to avoid reference to an unpleasant object or event. The
bite of a snake is always unpleasant and frequently fatal; a barber
suggests death and widowhood; and it is much better to think of a
tiger as a jackal. The euphemistic reference to the extinction of a [596]
lamp has a similar purpose: a lamp is the symbol of the solidarity
and strength of the *okka*, and its sudden extinction refers to the
decay and extinction of the *okka*. It also refers to the withdrawal of [782]
the protective power of the ancestors and the deities who are
invoked while saluting a lamp.

Among the Hindus of the eastern plains it is obligatory to light a 788
lamp in the house as soon as it is dark. A house without a lamp 354
suggests that everyone is dead in the house, or that they are too
poor to light one.

The ritual attitude prevalent towards the domestic lamp is easily [171]
extended to fire generally, and to the sun. These again provide
points of contact with Sanskritic or All-India Hinduism. [821]

The kitchen stove is a convenient focus for the general ritual 372
attitude existing towards fire. The kitchen stove, like the domestic 596
lamp, stands for the unity, strength, and protective power of the
okka and this fact finds ritual expression. When a member of the [764]
okka is dead and it is decided to cremate his body, the funeral pyre
is fired with a torch lighted from embers from the kitchen stove.
The torch is made with twigs collected from the domestic burial-ground.

The belief in the protective power of *teḷi nīr* is again the result of 372
783

372 a ritual attitude towards the kitchen stove. A few embers from the
783 kitchen stove and a few grains of cooked rice from a vessel on the
stove are put into a dining-dish. Water is poured on the embers and
rice, and a thick, ashy liquid is formed in the dining-dish. This
liquid is *teḷi nīr*, and great protective powers are attributed to it. The
mourners returning home on the eleventh day after performing the
rites in the burial-ground, a daughter-in-law returning to her
conjugal home with her baby born in her natal home, a member of
the house returning from a long journey, and a newly bought calf
are all sprinkled with it.

783 In the foregoing instances *teḷi nīr* removes some inimical or
778 dangerous power in the person or object that is coming into the
house. People who are 'strangers' to the *okka* have this power in
[609] them. A child of a male member of the *okka* born in its mother's
372 natal house, a newly bought calf, a member long absent from home,
596 and a mourner are all 'strangers' for purposes of *teḷi nīr*. Members
of the *okka* enjoy its protection and strength while persons
and objects outside it do not do so. Things that stand for the *okka*
represent its strength and protective power, and the kitchen stove
is an appropriate object to stand for the *okka*. The embers and
the cooked rice are both taken from the kitchen stove. The kitchen
stove and the dining-dish also stand for commensality which is a
basic feature of the *okka* in every part of India. In fact, commensality
is a legal criterion of 'jointness'. Commensality denotes the
unity and strength of the *okka*. Commensality is an act of solidarity.
Absence of commensality indicates division. In a country like
India where all kinds of ritual rules surround eating, commensality
assumes even greater importance than what it would have in
another society.

372 The domestic lamp, as long as it is burning, indicates that the
776 protective power of the *okka* is active, and its going out indicates
171 the withdrawal of such protective power. Such withdrawal spells
dangers to the members of the *okka*. The domestic lamp led to a
consideration of the significance of the kitchen stove, and this in
turn led to a consideration of fire generally and the sun. In
Sanskritic or All-India Hinduism, Agni is the god of fire and he
is related to Sāvitār or Sūrya, the sun-god. Agni and Sūrya are
deities in the Vēdas and they are known and understood all over
Hindu India. The local phenomenon of the attribution of sacredness
to the domestic lamp and kitchen stove is absorbed into the

All-India worship of Agni and Sūrya.[1] Coorgs are drawn into an 776
All-India ritual idiom which is mainly Sanskritic in character. 372 171

X

The sprinkling of rice on a person or thing is a common ritual 783
act in Coorg, and it is one of the several acts which together form 846
the ritual of *mūrta*. An instance of the ritual sprinkling of rice will be considered now with a view to discovering its meaning.

Birth results in pollution for the mother, the new-born infant, and the *okka* of which the mother is a member. While the other members of the polluted *okka* attain normal ritual status on the twelfth day of birth, the mother herself remains polluted till the sixtieth day. On that day, after a bath which ends her long period of pollution, she performs a certain ritual which signifies her resumption of her normal, pre-pollution duties.

One of her normal duties is the bringing of water from the [312]
domestic well into the kitchen, and the resumption of this particular duty is dramatized in '*Ganga pūja*' (worship of Ganga or Ganges). The confined woman has a bath, after which she changes into ritually pure garments. She then goes to the domestic well accompanied by two married women. First of all she salutes the sun by throwing some rice grains into the air, and this is followed by putting small quantities of rice thrice into the well. She then drops a few betel leaves, with the smooth side on top, into the well, and also empties the milk of a slit coconut into it. Finally, the confined woman and, after her, her two companions draw water from the well in vessels and carry the latter into the kitchen.

During the later stages of pregnancy, and for two months after the birth of the child, the confined woman has been freed from all domestic duties. The resumption of her domestic duties on the sixtieth day of the birth of the child is dramatized in the ritual of '*Ganga pūja*'. Her relationship with the domestic well has been broken for some time and the resumption of this relationship is not without a certain amount of 'awkwardness', as in the case of [778]
two human beings. The worship of the domestic well, the solidarity rites performed towards it, the offering of betel leaves and a coconut all make the process of resumption of contact smoother.

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[1] It may be argued, however, that the attribution of sacredness to the domestic lamp and stove is derived from the worship of Agni and Sūrya, and not vice versa.

764 While white rice is used in auspicious ritual, rice yellowed with
602 turmeric is used in inauspicious ritual. At the very important
funeral rite of 'breaking the pot', each of the mourners sprinkles a
824 little rice, yellowed with turmeric, on the corpse before saluting it.

The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons usually
[576] accompanies salutation. In *mūrta*, the sprinkling of rice occurs with
salutation and with the giving of milk and money presents. All these rites affirm a bond which exists between the subject and all those who perform them to him. These are members of his kin-group, caste-group, and village. They constitute his community. These rites of solidarity which affirm the existence of a bond between the subject and the community serve also to stress the importance of the particular *mangala* the subject is undergoing.

[243] It is entirely proper that rice and not any other grain or article should be used in the most common solidarity rite in Coorg. Even today rice has a very important place in the social and economic life of Coorgs, and formerly, before the introduction of coffee and oranges into Coorg, it was the most valuable crop.[1]

XI

585 The ritual of giving milk to the subject follows the sprinkling of rice on him. This, like the other ritual acts mentioned earlier, is performed at every *mangala* including marriage. While the structure of every *mangala* is, broadly speaking, the same, there are minor differences between one *mangala* and another. The ritual giving of milk at marriage makes the meaning of ritual milk-giving particularly clear.

On the first day of marriage *mūrta* is performed separately for the bride and groom *in their respective homes*. The bride's relatives and the high-caste members of her village perform *mūrta* to her *in her house*, and the groom's relatives and members of his village perform *mūrta* to him *in his house*.

On the second day, the groom's relatives go in state to the bride's house, and the groom's relatives perform *mūrta* to the bride. For this purpose *they carry some of their own rice and milk with them*.

The bride's relatives perform *mūrta* to the groom and, finally,

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[1] Among the Brahmins of south India the assembled priests and relatives bless the bridal pair by sprinkling on them rice yellowed with turmeric.

the groom performs *mūrta* to the bride. Later in the day the bride 585
leaves her natal home and accompanies the groom to his home.
Relatives of the groom who did not accompany him to the bride's
house now perform *mūrta* to the bride.

When a marriage takes place, it is not only two persons who [602]
come together but two kin-groups. They come together through
the acquisition of two common objects of interest. But before
marriage the bride was only an object of common interest to her
natal kin-group, and the groom to his natal kin-group.

When a marriage takes place, there is a change in the social personalities of the bride and groom. It gives them new rights and obligations. Some of this is symbolized in marriage ritual: for instance, the bride loses her rights in her natal *okka* and acquires them, instead, in her conjugal *okka*; she carries water from the groom's *okka's* well to his kitchen; and finally she carries manure to the groom's ancestral paddy-field.

Every *mangala* marks a change in the social personality of the 581
subject: he moves from one position in the status system to another.
On such an occasion the group concerned performs towards him a
series of solidarity rites. The performance of these solidarity rites
shows that the group concerned authorizes and approves of the
change in the social personality of the subject. A casteman or
relative who fails to attend the particular *mangala* is understood as
not approving of it. Relations between him and those who attend
become strained. He has effected a breach in the solidarity.

Like the sprinkling of rice, the giving of milk is a common 553
ritual act in Coorg. At the naming ceremony of a child, the mother 272
puts the infant into the cradle and says, 'Chengappa, get up to eat
rice mixed with milk.' She smears the child's tongue with a little
cream, using a gold coin to scoop the cream contained in a bowl.

A child is given solid food to eat six months after birth: and this 853
food usually consists of cooked rice mixed with milk and sugar. 585
On the second day after marriage, when the bride enters her con- 272
jugal home, her mother-in-law combs her hair and gives her rice
mixed with milk to eat. The latter dish is considered a great delicacy.

Milk is used not only on good-sacred occasions but also on bad- 272
sacred occasions. When an infant dies, a coconut-shell contain- 764
ing milk from its mother's breasts is placed over the grave; and
if it is a few months old, rice mixed with milk is placed there
instead.

764 On the day after the cremation of a corpse, the dead man's son
272 goes to the burial-ground, and on the spot where the dead man was
buried he pours successively a vessel of water and a vessel of milk.

Milk is a very valued commodity, and the ritual giving of milk
[431] indicates that solidarity is, or ought to be, prevalent between the
giver and the recipient. It is also a symbol of pleasure, luxury, and
[828] happiness, and consequently mourners abstain from it while they
[765] offer it to the spirit of the departed person. The mourners also
abstain from other valued objects like curd, honey, mushrooms,
meat, and betel leaves and areca-nut, which are again offered to
the dead person's spirit.

A kinsman who drank milk during the mourning-period would
be guilty of impiety towards the dead person. In the neighbouring
Kannaḍa country it is considered a very bitter abuse to tell a
person, 'I will drink milk when you die.'

[302] The use of milk is extended from solidarity rites to other rites
which have either no reference to solidarity at all or at best only a
very indirect one. While ordinarily water is used in shaving a man,
milk is used while shaving a bridegroom. The dish containing the
milk and the shavings is later emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding
[844] tree like the jack tree (*artocarpus integrifolia*). The placenta is
similarly buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. One of the five
pillars of a marriage *pandal* has to be a branch of a milk-exuding
tree. After a corpse has been cremated the bones are consigned
either to a river or buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. At
[765] mourning, leaf-cups made from the leaves of the jack tree are used
to offer food to the spirit of the departed person.

XII

585 Everyone who performs *mūrta* to the subject should give a
431 money-gift, and the three married women are expected to give a
gold coin (*pombaṇa*) each. At a wedding the mother of the bride
(or groom), and the groom while performing *mūrta* to the bride,
have to give a purse containing several coins, one of which should
be a gold coin.

A money-gift has to be given not only at *mangala* but on other
occasions as well: relatives who come to pay their last respects to
the dead man perform a series of solidarity rites at the end of which
they give a money-gift. Again, an infant has to be given a money-

gift on the occasion of giving him (or her) a name. In fact, a 585
relative who is seeing an infant for the first time must give a money- 431
gift. On the second day of marriage, when the bride visits the groom's house, she gives a money-gift to every infant in her conjugal *okka*. Later the groom does the same in the bride's *okka*.

It is hardly necessary to state that the giving of a money-gift does not always constitute a solidarity rite. It may be given in return for a service, which, however, might be purely nominal. A guest to a wedding gives a *paṇa* to each of the two girls holding a dish-lamp in his honour at the entrance to the bridal house.

At the wedding the elders of the groom's village publicly examine the box containing the bride's trousseau. They are collectively given five *paṇas* (fifteen annas), and this money is called 'witness money' (*sākshi paṇa*). Subsequently, if there is a dispute as to the contents of the bride's box the elders will be called upon to give evidence. Such disputes do not normally occur, however, except in the event of the woman wanting to return to her natal *okka* on becoming a widow, or after being divorced. Again, when the bride's family friend consents to hold himself responsible for her good behaviour in the groom's house he is paid a *paṇa* as 'witness-money'. The groom's family friend is paid similarly for holding himself responsible for the good behaviour of the groom's relatives.

In the above instances the passing of money from one hand to 431
another has the effect of sealing a contract. It may also be interpreted as payment in advance for some service to be rendered in the future. An occasion might not, and usually does not, arise requiring the elders or either of the family friends to render the service expected of them or him, and the strictly nominal character of the payment might be attributed to this fact. Such an interpretation is plausible, but does not appear to us to be true. In the instance just mentioned the emphasis seems to be much more on the fact of the acceptor of the money binding himself to a particular course of action in the future rather than on the services to be rendered in the future.

A gold coin is placed in the mouth of a dead man if the latter was 764
a married man. This coin is referred to as 'money for the road'. It probably refers to the expenses which the dead man's soul incurs on its journey. No gold coin is, however, placed in the mouth if the dead man was a bachelor, or had the reputation of being very wicked. In such a case a very bitter fruit called '*kānyaṇat kāyi*' is

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

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DANCERS ABOUT TO BEGIN DANCING

ANOTHER DANCE

[Facing p. 96]

764 placed in his mouth. A bachelor and a wicked man are both in a spiritually unsatisfactory condition, and it is believed that their ghosts are likely to trouble survivors. The bitter fruit is an appropriate symbol of his unsatisfactory spiritual condition, of the fact that he is a danger to the surviving relatives and others.

553 It may be recalled here that a gold coin is used in ritually feeding a child on the occasion of conferring a name on it. A gold (or silver) coin which is used in solidarity rites itself becomes a symbol of a satisfactory spiritual and ritual condition. It was seen that this happened to a much greater extent in the case of milk.

XIII

782 The various forms of salutation prevalent among Coorgs have already been described. It is interesting to note that there is no difference between the mode of salutation adopted towards another Coorg and that adopted towards a deity. A deity might be saluted either by bowing the head and folding the palms at the chest, or by first of all prostrating oneself completely before the image and then getting up and bowing the head and folding the palms. The former mode is adopted normally towards the wall-lamp, while the latter is adopted at a famous temple, or towards the wall-lamp on a special occasion.

[171] The Coorg form of salutation is prevalent among Hindus all over India, and it is only one of several instances where Coorgs participate in a ritual idiom common to all Hindus.

576 Salutation brings into relief a particular aspect of solidarity rites: solidarity does not necessarily mean the equality of the persons participating in the particular solidarity rite. Conversely, inequality between the participants does not denote lack of solidarity. When a young Coorg salutes his father's elder brother he is not claiming to be his uncle's equal. The very act of salutation expresses that the junior is inferior to the senior: the former's head is bent and he touches the latter's feet with both hands. The junior's hands are later carried back to his forehead.

In fact, a junior who failed to show the respect due to a senior by not saluting him would be effecting a breach in the solidarity. Hostility would be the result. Everyone would say that such a youth did not know his place, that his elders had not brought him up properly, and so on.

XIV

533 A band is considered essential to every ritual occasion: at *mangalas*, calendar festivals, and festivals of village-deities a band plays most of the time.

[585] A close relative comes to a wedding accompanied by his own band. He must be received by the hosts with band, and again, when he departs, the hosts must accompany him a little distance with their band leading the way. When the relative finally takes leave of the hosts he pays the latters' band three *paṇas*, one for the men blowing the horns, another for the pipers, and the third for the drummers.

[764] Relatives coming to pay their last respects to the dead man are also required to be accompanied by their band. If they are not accompanied by their own band, they arrange to hire the services of the local band, at some distance from the mourning-house.

[765] A band plays before a mourning-house too, but the beat (*chāvu paré* = death-beat) employed on this occasion is distinctive, and it may not be employed on an auspicious occasion.

533 585 [556] The presence of a band testifies to the social importance of the occasion or person. A wedding at which there was no band would be inconceivable to a Coorg. Again, if at a wedding an important guest were not received with a band, he would regard it as an insult. Coorgs have an elaborate code of courtesy, and this has to be scrupulously observed.

[574] The *okkas* of the bride and groom have each to give several dinners during the wedding. These dinners are of two kinds: one in which the chief guests are the members of the particular bridal party's own village, and another in which the important guests are from other villages.

621 585 574 The above distinction is important, as it throws light on the social structure. A village forms a unity, and ideally speaking it is not only the bride's (or groom's) *okka*, but her (or his) entire village which ought to act as hosts. Formerly they did not sit down to dinner with the guests from other villages, but waited on the latter along with the members of the host *okka*. They sat down to dinner later.

On the day before the wedding, every house in the village has to send one man and one woman to the bridal house to help in the wedding work. They have to do every kind of work which the

621 wedding involves, but their primary duties seem to be cooking the
585 huge dinners and serving them to the guests, and looking after the
574 guests generally.

After the villagers have arrived the head of the bridal house requests them to take charge of the wedding for him and to exercise due economy in the discharge of their duties. In the evening there is a dinner for the villagers which is called *ūrū patti* (village dinner), and which seems to mark their assumption of responsibility. There is another village dinner on the day after the marriage at which the villagers return the 'ladle and spoon' to the bridal *okka*. The return of the 'ladle and spoon' marks the end of the villagers' duties at the wedding. The villagers apologize to the head of the bridal *okka* for any faults they might have committed in the discharge of their duties, and the head thanks them for the great help rendered by them.

621 The members of a village in which a death has occurred are
765 required to help the bereaved *okka* in several ways during mourning
574 and the latter *okka* give the villagers two dinners at the conclusion of ritual mourning to express their thanks. The services rendered, and the dinners given, are both obligatory, and they are among the many links which bind together the members of the village community.

621 Besides the above dinners the members of a village occasionally
574 dine together and this is referred to as '*ūrormé*' or 'village harmony'. The solidarity of the village expresses itself at these dinners, even though all the castes in the village do not sit together at them. It has to be remembered in this connexion that the nuclear unit of the Coorg community, the *okka*, is normally a commensal unit. The sub-caste too occasionally dines together, and one of the punishments inflicted on the excommunicated man is that he may not be admitted to the caste dinners.

585 On the day after the wedding the bride goes to the groom's
574 house where a few rites are performed which symbolize the admission of the bride into the groom's *okka*. The marriage is consummated that night, and the bride returns to her natal house after spending a few days in the groom's house. She is not allowed to be seen by members of her natal village until a dinner has been given to them.

Richter tells us that formerly the bride returning to her natal home was 'treated as unclean', 'shut up like a woman after child-birth', and that she was kept in seclusion 'for a fortnight, or a 585 month, or even two months, according to the wealth and respectability 574 of the family'.[1] Elderly informants deny that she was regarded as unclean, but they do confirm the fact that she was not allowed to see the villagers before a dinner had been given to them.

The bride becomes a member of the groom's *okka* at marriage. The consummation of the marriage in the groom's house on the second night also indicates to her that her future position is that of a mother who contributes children to her husband's *okka*. Marriage in a patrilocal and patrilineal kinship system affects a greater change in the bride's social personality than in the groom's. She is a new person, and this is recognized in her not being allowed to meet the members of her natal village before a dinner has been given them. When there has been a break in the continuity of a relationship, or when a relationship with a new person has to be begun, the best way to do it is with a dinner. Dinner, as we have noted earlier, is an act of solidarity, and the villagers forge their solidarity with the new person, the bride returning to her natal house from the groom's.

XV

All *mangalas* except marriage have either become defunct or so 585 rarely performed that nowadays *mangala* is almost synonymous 554 with marriage. The ritual performed at marriage may be divided into two parts, one part being *mangala*, and the other concerned with the jural aspect of marriage. Only the former part has been analysed in this chapter. By means of this analysis it is hoped to give content to the concept of ritual idiom and to understand the meanings of certain ritual acts which are very common among Coorgs.

Mūrta is the crucial part of *mangala*, and the subject of *mangala* 554 is prepared for *mūrta* by a series of preparatory and purificatory ritual acts such as shaving, bath, and the donning of ritual robes and ornaments. The various occasions on which each one of these preparatory ritual acts is performed have been considered in order to discover their meanings.

Mūrta itself consists of a series of solidarity rites performed on the subject of it by each member of the concerned group. The

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[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 139.

554 process of discovering the meaning of each one of the ritual acts gave us an idea of the ritual idiom of Coorgs.

561 Solidarity rites are performed on the subject of *mangala*, and
554 each *mangala* marks a change in the subject's social personality. Thus the ear-boring *mangala* marked the attainment of adulthood by a youth. His social personality altered again at marriage as he then acquired new rights and duties.

555 A man who killed a panther or tiger in a hunt was entitled to *mangala* being performed. A man who had built a new house performed *mané* or house *mangala*, at which *mūrta* was performed to him.

881 *Polé kanḍa mangala* was performed to a girl some time after she
851 had attained puberty. This corresponded to a boy's ear-boring *mangala*. Marriage is another *mangala* occasion for her and, formerly, *mangala* was performed to her in the fifth or seventh month of her first pregnancy. This marked the attainment of the status of a mother by her. Motherhood is a valued status, and a woman who gave birth to ten children, all of whom were alive, was the subject of a *mangala* ceremony known as *paitānḍek aḷapa*.

553 A child is ritually given a name on the eleventh day of birth, but this does not constitute a *mangala* as the child does not count socially till either the ear-boring or puberty *mangala* has been performed.

777 *Mangala* is confined to auspicious occasions, and this is the reason why the ritual disposal of a corpse does not assume the form of a *mangala*.

626 *Mangala* carries with it the approval of society. This is brought out clearly in certain cases. For instance, the marriage of a widow does not constitute a *mangala*, while the marriage of a widower does. This is because Coorgs, like Brahmins and other high castes, do not approve of the marriage of a widow. But in the case of Coorgs the disapproval is not sufficiently strong to prohibit altogether the marriage of a widow, as it is among the Brahmins.

555 When a man killed a panther, *mangala* was performed for him on the village green (*ūr mandu*), whereas it was performed for him on the *nāḍ* green if he killed a tiger. Killing a tiger is worthy of more honour than killing a panther.

When the youthful hero Kaiyandira Appayya killed the great fighter Chōndu and thus restored the prestige of Kaḍiyetnāḍ, the general approval with which Appayya's action was regarded expressed itself in a *mangala* being performed for him.

[p. 101]

IV

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(2) THE CONCEPTS OF *POLÉ* AND *MAḌI*

I

771 The external world is divided into two parts, the sacred and non-sacred. The term 'sacred' is used in its wider sense as inclusive of 'good-sacredness' as well as 'bad-sacredness'. Good-sacredness includes all forms of ritually desirable states and conditions like auspiciousness and purity, while bad-sacredness includes all forms of ritually undesirable states and conditions such as inauspiciousness and impurity.

783 The Koḍagi term for ritual purity is *maḍi*, and this term is found in all other Dravidian languages except Malayāḷam; and *polé*, which means ritual impurity, is found in all Dravidian languages except Telugu.

Polé is used in Koḍagi in two senses: one, in which it means ritual impurity generally; and another in which it means certain specific forms of ritual impurity. In the latter cases it is usual to add the necessary prefixes: for instance, *kuruḍu polé* (blind pollution) or *tinga polé* (monthly pollution) refers to the impurity of a woman in her periods, and *petta polé* or *puruḍu*[1] *polé* refers to birth pollution.

The pollution resulting from the death of a person is called *tīké*. *Tīṭ* in Tamil means death-pollution, while *tīṭ* in Koḍagi means faeces. A house in which an adult has died is referred to as *tīké mané* (polluted house) till the end of ritual mourning. On the day ritual mourning ends, in the afternoon, after the mourners have returned from the burial-ground, the family friend says, 'Until now mourning, from now on festival' (*indākaṇé tammé inya pinya nammé*). *Tammé* is used to mean mourning, while *nammé* is used to mean festival.

All over India there is a ban on a member of a higher caste touching, or coming very close to, a member of a lower caste. This

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[1] *Puruḍu* which means the pollution consequent on birth occurs in all Dravidian languages excepting Malayāḷam.

783 is specially so where the structural distance between the two castes is very great. In Malabar and Coorg the ban on contact between different castes has been elaborately systematized. People belonging to two different castes have to maintain a certain minimum distance between them, and failure to do so results in the member of the higher caste being polluted. *Tinḍu polé* means the pollution that results from the failure to maintain the requisite distance between two people belonging to different castes.

A man is in a condition of ritual impurity in relation to a member of a higher caste while he is in a condition of ritual purity towards a member of a lower caste. The concepts of ritual purity and impurity systematize and maintain the structural distance between different castes. Caste hierarchy, on the other hand, makes these concepts relative, except with reference to castes at either extreme. The Brahmin is in a condition of purity in relation to all other castes, while the Untouchable is in a condition of ritual impurity to them. One of the most important Untouchable castes are the Poleyas (*polé+ya*). Holeyas are an important Untouchable caste of the Kannaḍa country, and Pulayans of Malabar. The names of each of these contain the local term for pollution.

761 844 Events like birth and death result in polluting the *okka* in which the event has occurred, and certain other relatives. The pollution resulting from birth is milder than the pollution consequent on death. But in both cases pollution affects only the concerned kindred, and it is the means by which concern is defined and made known to everyone.

841 A woman is in a condition of *polé* for three days during her periods, and she becomes pure only on the fourth day after a bath in the morning. Formerly, the women of an *okka* had to live in an outhouse, at a little distance from the main building, during their periods. They had to maintain a certain distance from other members of the *okka*, and from other people in a condition of normal ritual status. They were specially required to keep away from the ancestor-shrine and from the cobra-platform. The cobra-deity was specially sensitive to defilement, and it was believed that if a woman approached the cobra-platform during her periods, the wrath of the deity would descend on the *okka* of which she was a member.

Coorg women do not nowadays observe any restrictions during their periods. This is surprising as elsewhere in south India these restrictions are still in force.

Unlike birth and death, menses do not affect the entire *okka*. 841 They only affect the particular woman, but the important point to note is that she is required to avoid touching other members of the *okka* and abstain from going near the sacred places on the ancestral estate. The safety and well-being of the *okka* will be jeopardized if she does not observe these restrictions.

It was seen that the concepts of ritual purity and impurity are 769 very intimately related to permanent features of the social structure 783 like caste and *okka*, and later on it will be seen that they are also related to the village, but these concepts also occur in certain non-structural contexts. A man, irrespective of the caste to which he belongs, is in a condition of ritual purity while praying or sacrificing to an ancestor or deity. He attains this ritual purity by the performance of a series of ritual actions like taking a bath and wearing ritually pure clothes. He comes into contact with an ancestor or deity when he is praying or making a sacrifice, and such contact requires that he should be in a condition of ritual purity. This principle is carried even into ritual mourning: mourners making an offering of food to the spirit of the departed person are in a condition of extreme ritual purity while they do it, though their general ritual condition till the conclusion of mourning is *tiké*, an extreme form of pollution.

II

Bodily emissions and waste matter are ritually impure. Sexual 783 intercourse resulting in the production of certain fluids from the [831] bodies of both the partners is prohibited while a person is in a ritually pure condition: the festival-priests at the festival of Kētrappa have to observe continence during the twenty-one days of the biennial festival. In order to ensure that they do observe this rule they are required to sleep in the outer veranda which women do not normally enter.

A person who is in a ritually pure condition may not answer a [514] call of nature. He becomes impure if he does so. Spittle is also [827] ritually impure. This is so all over India, especially among the [515] upper castes. A person may not touch his tongue or teeth with his fingers, and should he do so, he has to wash his hands. Elders come down heavily on a child who puts his finger into his mouth. A person is required specially to avoid putting his finger into his mouth while cooking or serving food.

783 The Koḍagi term for spittle is *tupnīr* (*tupparadu* in Tamil means 'to spit'), and it is essential to distinguish between spittle and
827 objects which have come into contact with spittle directly or indirectly. The Koḍagi term for the latter class of objects is *enji* (Kannaḍa, *enjalu*, Tamil and Malayāḷam, *echchal*). A man who touches his tongue with a finger defiles his entire hand. This is prohibited normally and especially so while cooking, or serving food, or praying. If he touches a dish of food with a finger which has come into contact with his tongue, he defiles the entire dish. None may eat it.

783 A Coorg folk-tale illustrates extremely well the power of spittle.
827 Seven deities, six brothers and a sister, set out from Malabar in
539 search of shelter. Three brothers manage, however, to find 'shelter' in Malabar villages alone. The other three brothers, together with their sister, cross over into Coorg. As soon as they cross the border a struggle for supremacy develops between the brothers and sister. The latter defeats the former in several trials of skill. The brothers then conspire to overthrow the sister. After dinner they all chew betel leaves and areca-nut. One of the brothers takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and, holding it before the others, says, 'See how red my stuff is'! The others follow suit. The sister's stuff is redder than everybody else's. The brothers then pretend to take the chewed stuff back to their mouths. The sister is taken in and actually puts the stuff into her mouth. The brothers, after making certain that the sister has put her stuff into her mouth, throw their stuff behind their backs. They all exclaim, 'You have eaten *enji*; you have lost your caste'. The unfortunate sister is heartbroken, but the brothers are adamant, and force her to become the deity of Poleyas!

783 Nail and hair parings are impure, and they have to be thrown
827 far away from the house. Poverty will result if they are scattered in the house.

[305] While a person occasionally pares his finger and toe nails, he does not cut his own hair. This is the barber's job, and the barber's touch defiles a Coorg. The latter takes a bath and changes his clothes after he has been shaved. The place where the barber and his customer sat is purified.

Faeces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, spittle, and parings of nail and hair are all ritually impure.[1] As such they are inconsistent

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[1] The natural functions of the body are a great source of pollution, and this idea is at the bottom of the asceticism which is present in Hinduism.

with a condition of ritual purity. It is obvious that in the above 783
instances physical dirt has been identified with ritual impurity. 827
Purification consists in taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. Dirt, then, is seen as ritual impurity, and cleanliness as ritual purity. It is necessary, however, to stress that they are ritual and not natural states.

Birth and death both result in ritual impurity for the entire 783
household for several days. This ritual impurity will not disappear even if the impure person has a dozen baths a day. But, once the prescribed period is over, the individual attains his normal ritual status after a bath. It is necessary to stress that ritual purity is fundamentally different from cleanliness, though they overlap frequently. A simple association of ritual purity with cleanliness, and ritual impurity with dirtiness, would be a neat arrangement, but it would falsify the facts. One comes across ritually pure robes which are very dirty, and snow-white clothes which are ritually impure.

A corpse is ritually impure and contact with it results in pollu- [764]
tion. The crow, which is a scavenger bird, and is everywhere [769]
associated with death, is also impure. The spirits of dead ancestors assume the forms of crows on certain ritual occasions when they are propitiated. The conclusion of funeral rites is marked everywhere by the offer of balls of rice to the dead man's spirit. These balls are kept either on the roof of the house or on the ground at some distance from the house. If the crows fall to these balls soon, it is believed that the dead man is satisfied. Delay in the arrival of the crows indicates that the dead man is dissatisfied.

If the crows perch on a roof and caw, the death of someone [787]
under that roof is presaged. A man who sees two crows mating [761]
will die soon after unless he sends a false message announcing his
death to his kinsmen. Nowadays it is not unusual for a person who [784]
has seen two crows mating to send a telegram announcing his death to his kinsmen.[1] The mating of crows means their increase, and the man who sees it is likely to die. The way he can counteract this is by announcing his death as soon as he has seen the crows mate. The ends of justice are met by such an announcement.

If a crow's droppings fall on a person, he or she will have to dip in a tank or river a thousand times. This is extremely inconvenient,

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[1] Needless to say, this causes the unfortunate kinsfolk a considerable amount of worry and suffering.

783 and so the person in question sits under a sieve while water is poured on him through it. The sieve has a few hundred holes, and every time a vessel of water is poured into it the person underneath has a few hundred baths. When the proper observance of a ritual rule or prohibition involves great trouble and inconvenience there come into existence ritual mechanisms which take the edge off the rules.

III

Bad-sacredness is a wider concept than pollution or ritual impurity; and there are several degrees of ritual impurity. The birth of a child results in a mild form of pollution called *petta polé* or *puruḍu* for seven or twelve days for all members of the *okka* except the mother of the new-born baby, who attains normal ritual status only on the sixtieth day. During birth-pollution the members of the *okka* avoid going to a temple. But they may go to a dance or wedding where they are bound to touch people in normal ritual status.

Tīké or death-pollution is quite a different matter, however. The members of the dead man's *okka* have to avoid touching people in normal status for a period of at least twelve days after death. During this period they have to observe certain taboos regarding food and dress. *Tīké* might be described as an acute form of pollution, while *petta polé* or *puruḍu polé* is a mild form of it. But the latter is a more serious form of pollution than normal ritual status.

Normal ritual status is the status which a person enjoys most of the time. From this point of view, both *maḍi* and *polé*, both ritual purity and impurity, are deviations from the normal. Death-pollution is also an abnormal ritual condition, lasting only for a short period, comparatively speaking.

There is no term in Koḍagi for normal ritual status. When Coorgs want to describe this condition they resort to the Kannaḍa (and also Telugu) term *mailigé*. It is interesting to note that the soiled clothes which a washerman takes away are *mailigé*, and the clean clothes which he brings back are *maḍi*. The washerman himself is referred to as *maḍivāḷa*.

Ritual impurity, normal ritual status, and ritual purity form a hierarchy. If a person in an impure condition touches another in a condition of either purity or normal ritual status, the latter becomes impure. If a person in a condition of normal ritual status touches another in a pure condition, the latter loses his purity and is reduced to normal ritual status. That is, normal ritual status is a mild form of impurity.

Tiké or death-pollution represents the highest degree of ritual impurity, *polé* or birth-pollution comes next, and *mailigé* or normal ritual status is the mildest form of ritual impurity. But *maḍi* or ritual purity is of a different quality altogether, and contact with impurity in any form usually destroys it.

IV

It has been mentioned earlier that there is an opposition between good-sacredness and bad-sacredness. This implies that *maḍi* which is good-sacred and *polé* which is bad-sacred are opposed to each other. In concrete terms, a man who is in a condition of *polé* or *tiké* may not go to a ritually pure place like the temple and village green. Conversely, a person who is in a condition of *maḍi* like the man who is chosen to cut ritually the paddy sheaves at the harvest festival may not come into contact with a man enjoying normal ritual status, still less with someone in a condition of *polé*. A person in *maḍi* avoids a person in *polé*.[1]

There are exceptions to this rule, however. Kaiyandira Appayya, the boy-hero who saved the honour of Kaḍiyetnāḍ, was showered with honours and privileges by a grateful *nāḍ*. One of the privileges permitted him to visit the temple even when he was suffering from *polé*. A similar privilege is even today enjoyed by the Bellitanḍa *okka* in the temple of Bytūrappa in north Malabar. Bytūrappa, a form of Shiva, is the patron-deity of a number of *okkas* in south-west Coorg. The Bellitanḍa *okka* have the special privilege of being able to send offerings to their patron-deity even while under *polé*. This is because a pregnant woman of the Bellitanḍa *okka* who was fleeing from Tippu's troops sought and found sanctuary in the Bytūrappa temple. She gave birth to a boy in the temple and the boy spent sixteen years in the temple before returning to his *okka* in Coorg. There is thus a special bond between the Bellitanḍa *okka* and the deity Bytūrappa, and this is recognized in the fact that the former are permitted to send offerings even while under *polé*.

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[1] At the annual festival of the deity Kākkōṭ Achchayya, the Brahmin priest carrying the idol of the deity flies into the temple at the sight of the Baṇṇa oracle. The Brahmin and the idol he carries would both be defiled if he did not do so.

Maḍi and *polé* are opposed to each other, and the normal relation between them is one of avoidance. But where very great solidarity is prevalent between two persons or parties, the existence of such opposition between *maḍi* and *polé* is overruled. In the folksongs there is an explicit recognition of the fact that the waiving of such opposition in certain special cases is a favour granted to a human being for certain reasons.

V

The ritual concepts of *maḍi* and *polé* are intimately related to the social structure. A member of a high caste is in a condition of *maḍi* in relation to a member of a low caste, and the latter is in a condition of *polé* in relation to the former. There is a ban on contact between castes belonging to different strata.

It is interesting to note that when a low-caste man touches a high-caste man, the latter is defiled and the former is not purified. It is argued by some that this is a *structural necessity* as the essence of a stratified society consists in maintenance of the structural distance between various castes, and this distance would be destroyed if contact between two men belonging to different castes led to the lower being purified instead of the higher being defiled. This argument ignores that egalitarianism is reached not only when everyone attains purity but also when everyone is defiled. In any case, *normally* the change of ritual status consequent on members of different castes coming into contact with each other is only temporary. It does not lead to a permanent change of ritual status.[1]

A high-caste man is no doubt in a condition of ritual purity in relation to a low-caste man. But considered by himself, his normal ritual status is *mailigé*, which is a mild form of impurity. He attains purity on certain occasions, and *polé* and *tiké* on certain other occasions. Similarly, the low-caste man, considered by himself, is *mailigé* normally, and *polé* and *maḍi* only occasionally.

One last point needs to be made before completing our account of the relation between *polé* and *maḍi*. The mourner who is in a condition of *tiké*, an extreme form of defilement, is required to perform certain rites. Usually these rites consist in the offering of

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[1] It is not always that a *maḍi*-object becomes defiled when it comes in contact with a *polé*-object: the sprinkling of consecrated water purifies a person or house in a condition of ritual impurity.

food in one form or another to the spirit of the departed person. 783
The mourner has to observe punctiliously a number of rules and restrictions while making these offerings: he has to have a bath in cold water, wear ritually pure robes, and observe a fast. He starts cooking his food only after he has made the ritual offerings for the day. Many kinds of food are prohibited to him during mourning, and he may have only one proper meal every day.

Conditions like a bath, the wearing of ritually pure robes, and the observance of a total fast till the completion of the ritual are also observed while performing good-sacred ritual. A person takes a bath and wears ritually pure robes before worshipping a deity. He breaks his fast only after the worship is over. While *polé* and *maḍi* are normally mutually opposed, the mourner who is in a condition of *tiké* fulfils the same preliminary ritual rules as the devotee about to pray. The mourner when offering food to the spirit of the dead person is inhabiting a world which is very far removed from that of the devotee about to pray. The former is living in a world of ritual impurity, whereas the latter is living in the world of ritual purity. But within the world of ritual impurity the mourner attains a form of ritual purity prior to performing the most important rites: in other words he attains *maḍi* in *polé*.

The concepts of normal ritual status, pollution, and purity apply not only to Coorgs but to all castes, including Untouchables. An Untouchable, like any high-caste man, is normally *mailigé*, and only occasionally and for comparatively short periods is he *maḍi* or *polé*. It should not be assumed that an Untouchable is in a permanent and unalterable condition of ritual impurity. While contact with an Untouchable always pollutes a high-caste man, an Untouchable, considered by himself, is as subject to the various ritual states as anyone else.

VI

A few words are necessary here on the length of the period of 765
mourning. For everyone except the dead person's spouse and 783
eldest son, ritual mourning ends on the day the *māda* ceremony is performed. Nowadays, *māda* is *usually* performed on the twelfth day. But sometimes, in the case of a big headman or official, it is performed on the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day. The length of the mourning period is thus an index of the social importance

765 of the dead person. This statement receives additional support 783 from the fact that no ritual mourning is observed for an infant: only the parents of the dead infant take a bath and change their robes after the corpse has been buried. An elder, unlike an infant, is socially important and has a voice in the affairs of his *okka* and village. Ritual mourning is quite different from grief at the death of the person in question. The parents of the infant might be steeped in sorrow, while the death of a decrepit and senile elder might actually mean very little grief. Still, in the former case no ritual mourning is observed, whereas in the latter case it might be prolonged to the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day.

[178] Elderly Coorgs say that mourning periods are becoming shorter, and this is not surprising as the kin-groups are becoming smaller and the old values are giving place to new ones. Formerly *māda* was usually performed, for an elder, on the twenty-eighth day and *not* on the sixteenth. *Mādam* in Tamil means 'month', and there are twenty-eight days in a lunar month.

As has already been mentioned, the performance of *māda* puts an end to ritual mourning for all excepting the surviving spouse and eldest son. These two have to observe ritual mourning until they have performed *dīkshé uttuva* (untying of mourning), which is usually a few weeks, if not months, after *māda*. Between *māda* and *dīkshé uttuva* the two most important mourners do not perform any rites, but merely observe some of the food taboos and wear mourning dress.

Speaking very broadly, the length of the mourning period is an index of the closeness of the bond prevailing between the dead person and the mourners. This holds good for birth-pollution too: while pollution ends for all relatives on the twelfth day, it ends for [593] the mother on the sixtieth day. The mother-child bond is the closest of all kinship bonds, and this fact finds expression in the mother being subject to birth-pollution longer than everybody else.

VII

Senior relatives of the dead person do not play an active part in ritual mourning. This does not, however, mean that they are completely exempt from it, especially those who are members of the same house as the dead person. As members of the pollution house (*tīké mané*), they may not salute anyone, nor allow anyone to

765 783 Mourners of the third grade have to abstain from meat, fish, mushrooms, liquor, honey, milk, and betel leaves and areca-nut. The men are required to have their heads and faces shaved completely. They may not wear any jewellery, nor tie the red sash round their waists. They have to avoid wearing coloured garments, especially garments coloured red.

Women mourners of the third grade are required to remove their jewellery, except such as is symbolical of the married state. The widow of the dead man has to remove even that. Women mourners dress themselves in a white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. The upper ends of the former are tied in a knot at the chest.

It has been mentioned earlier that all men mourners indicate the beginning of mourning by having the head and face shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse. They may not have another shave till the *māda* day, when ritual mourning ends for all except the first-grade mourners.

Nowadays *māda* is performed usually on the twelfth day of death, and on this day, after the afternoon meal has been eaten by all the mourners, three men mourners have their faces shaved by the barber. This shave is one of the ritual acts marking the end of mourning and the resumption of normal social life by all except the first-grade mourners.

The men who are observing first-grade mourning have to wear either a white gown or a shoulder-cloth (*tuṃḍu*) and waist-cloth (*muṃḍu*). A mourner does not usually wear a gown nowadays, but if he wears one, he may not pass his right arm through the right arm of the gown.

Until the *māda* day, first-grade mourners take a cold-water bath every morning, after which they perform the rites prescribed for the day. They then start cooking their meal, which is done in the cattle-shed, or any other sheltered spot outside the main building. They may not have more than one meal per day, and they have to pay scrupulous attention to the various food restrictions. They are, however, allowed to eat a few fruits at night.

The surviving spouse has to observe more restrictions than other first-grade mourners. He (or she) may not sleep on a cot, or sit on a plank. He may not eat from a dining-dish (*taḷi*), but has to use a leaf instead. He may not ford a river. A silver chain is wound round his left wrist, and in his left hand he holds a knife.

The *māda* ceremony frees all mourners from ritual mourning,

but not, however, the first-grade mourners, who are only freed at 765
the *dīkshé uttuva* ceremony, which is performed long after the 783
māda. Until then, honey and milk may not be consumed, ornaments and coloured cloths may not be worn. A woman mourner has to wear the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. A man mourner may not have his face or head shaved.

VIII

The offer of food to the spirit of the departed person is a [764]
dominant motif in Coorg funeral ritual. When the corpse is still seated in the paved yard of the house, one of the mourners carries some cooked rice on a plantain leaf and places it at the bottom of the lane leading to the house. He also places on the plantain leaf a lighted cotton wick on a piece of coconut: this serves as a lamp. As he does this, double shots are fired from a gun. He salutes the leaf as he would a corpse, and other mourners follow him in saluting the food-offering and lamp.

The family friend places a food-bundle on the grave directly above the spot where the corpse's head rests. In case of cremation, the bundle is placed at the spot where the head lay before cremation.

On the second, third, and fourth days, the first-grade mourners offer raw, uncooked rice to fish in a pond or lake, and this is called 'water sacrifice' (*nīr beli*). On the fifth, sixth, and seventh days, 'shore sacrifice' (*karé beli*) is performed: the first-grade mourners go to the pond or lake, and each of them cooks a little rice on an improvised stove on the edge of the pond or lake. No vessel may be used for cooking this rice. A flat bit of a broken pot is used instead. This rice is then removed on to a plantain leaf which is kept on a purified spot near the stove.

On the eighth, ninth, and tenth days food is offered to crows. A sacrificial post (*beli mara*) of wood is erected in the yard before the mourning-house. A plank is fixed horizontally to the top of the post. The dead person's spouse cooks rice and prepares vegetable curry, and these are mixed and placed on a plantain leaf. The leaf is then kept on the plank on top of the post. As he (or she) keeps this, he claps his hands and shouts '*kā, kā*' (in imitation of the cawing of crows).

On the eleventh (*pannand*) day, each of the second-grade

765 783 mourners attains partial freedom from mourning after he has offered rice mixed with *ghi*, curd, and plantain to the spirit of the departed person. The food is carried on a plantain leaf to the sacrificial post, where it is placed to be eaten by crows. As each of them comes into the house from the sacrificial post the family friend gives him (or her) a few betel leaves and areca-nut. The mourner chews the leaves and nut for a while, and then takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and throws it on the roof. The chewing of the leaves and nut on the eleventh day is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

On the *māda* day curried meat, rice, arrack, water, and betel leaves and areca-nut are offered to the dead person's spirit. A plantain leaf on which some curried meat and rice are heaped is placed at each of the three spots where the corpse was rested *en route* to the burial-ground. At the burial-ground itself the surviving spouse and two other mourners sprinkle water on the spot where the dead person was buried or cremated. Above the spot where the corpse's head rests are kept three leaves, each containing curried meat, and rice, and three leaf-cups (*chaḷḷé*) containing arrack, water, and betel and nut respectively. Each of the mourners takes a betel leaf and nut from the leaf-cup in which they are kept, and chews them.

769 782 Food is offered to the dead ancestors of the *okka* at the periodical ancestor-propitiations. It is also offered to them as a body on the last days of Taurus and Cancer, and on the tenth of Libra. Besides, at every festival celebrated in the house, food is offered to the ancestors before the members of the household sit down to their meal.

The idea of offering food and drink to the dead person has a very important place in funeral ritual. The departed ancestors of the *okka* are remembered constantly, and food and drink are offered to them. They are also saluted and prayed to every day.

IX

796 783 A village is in a condition of ritual purity during the festival of the main deity of the village, a festival which usually lasts nine or eleven days, and sometimes even twenty-one days. No woman in her periods may stay in Bēngūr village during the festival of Kētrappa. She has to leave the village at once and may return only

on the eighteenth day, in the evening, after the shot has been fired 796
freeing the village from the restrictions in force during the festival. 783
Similarly, no Poleya may leave his hut and show himself to a member of a high caste during the first eighteen days of the festival. They are specially forbidden to show themselves to the festival-priests (*kāvukāras*). The Poleyas are very greatly afraid of Kētrappa, whom they call 'big god' (*doḍḍa dēvaru*), and it is believed that Kētrappa will punish them if they show themselves to the villagers during the festival.

The festival of the village-deity usually includes a ceremony called *tappaḍaka* (enumeration of restrictions), in which all the adult villagers assemble together at the temple and take a vow to the effect that they will observe certain restrictions for the duration of the festival.

No villager may fire his gun during the festival, nor may he [784]
kill an animal for his food. He is not permitted to break an egg or coconut, or prepare liquor or season his curries. He may not spread a mat or carpet on the benches in the veranda or hall.

Sometimes the villagers are permitted to import meat from another village, the prohibition being only on the animal being killed within the village. Even where such concessions are made to the ordinary villagers, the festival-priests are strictly enjoined to keep off even imported meat.

The festival-priests have to refrain from sexual intercourse [834]
during the festival. They are also enjoined not to touch the ordinary high-caste villager who, it must be remembered, is himself in a condition of ritual purity. Such contact defiles them for the rest of the day, and only a bath in cold water early next morning restores them to their condition of great ritual purity. There are different levels of ritual purity, and each level is impurity with reference to a higher level.

The festival-priests are much more important for the festival 793
than ordinary villagers. They dress and worship the idol. Usually 796
one or more of them are oracles of one or other of the deities in 783
the village temple. Their duties require their being frequently very near the idols and other representations of the deities they worship. Consequently, they have to be in a condition of great ritual purity. They have to observe more restrictions regarding food and other matters than ordinary villagers. The degree of

793 ritual purity becomes, in this case, an index of the degree of con-
796 cern in the festival. What is interesting to note is the widespread
783 systematization of 'concern' in Coorg culture. The mother of the
newly born infant has to observe pollution for a longer period than other relatives; and first-grade mourners have to observe mourning for a longer period than others. Not only the length of the period but also the number and character of the restrictions observed are used to mark off those with greater 'concern' in the event from those with less 'concern'. The greater the 'concern' the greater the bond.

796 The festival of a village-deity usually includes a ritual fast or
785 *paṭni*: a day towards the end of the festival is called '*paṭni* day' and
262 the villagers observe a ritual fast on this day. The fast day usually
occurs before the festival (*nammé*) day. The festival day is regarded as the most important day of the festival, elaborate ritual being performed on this day, at the end of which animals are sacrificed. The various restrictions observed during the festival are broken on the festival day, usually towards evening. A big feast follows, which includes meat dishes and liquor, prohibited until now.

A ritual fast does not necessarily mean actual abstention from food. Frequently a ritual fast means only abstention from everyday food, and that too interpreted very narrowly. For instance, cooked rice grains and vegetable curry are the normal food among Coorgs, and this is prohibited at a ritual fast. But while cooked rice grains are prohibited, dishes made with rice-flour are not.

On the fast day Coorgs miss a meal, instead of which they consume pancakes made of rice-flour, and *pāyasa*, a sweet liquid dish made with split green gram. Pancackes and green gram *pāyasa* are very commonly eaten during ritual fasts in the Tamil country.

Coorgs are forbidden to eat pancakes and green gram *pāyasa* during weddings and while birth- and death-pollution last. As far as they are concerned this diet seems to be confined to the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. It is difficult to see the purpose of the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. While the observance of a ritual fast on the festival day till the rites are completed is understandable, a ritual fast on the day before the festival day is not easy to understand, especially if the villagers are permitted to eat the normal festival diet on the morning of the festival day. The fast day seems to exist quite unrelated to the rest of the structure of the festival of a village-deity.[1] 796 785 262

X

Some of the ritual acts performed and practices observed at 764 mourning are obviously reversals or inversions of the acts and 784 practices performed on good-sacred or auspicious occasions. For instance, the corpse is made to lie on a mat spread with the underside on top. It is true that like the subject of *mangala* the corpse is dressed in a white gown, but the latter is reversed in some way: it is worn with the underside uppermost, or with the left end of the gown coming on top of the right end. On auspicious occasions the proper side has to be on top, and the right end should rest on top of the left.

After the corpse has been laid in the grave, the surviving spouse throws three handfuls of earth into the grave. He (or she) twists his hand (*terangai* = twisted hand) while throwing the earth into the grave. The eldest son and other relatives follow the surviving spouse. If the corpse is going to be cremated instead of being buried, the surviving spouse sets fire to the pyre by thrusting a firebrand into it. Again, he employs the twisted hand while setting fire to the pyre (*terangoḷḷi* = twisted firebrand).

In ritual circumambulation, movement in the clockwise direction is prescribed for auspicious occasions, while anti-clockwise movement is prescribed for inauspicious occasions. The groom goes round the sacred tripod stool clockwise. A devotee goes round the temple clockwise. But the mourners go round the funeral pyre in the anti-clockwise way. Similarly, the bier is thrice carried round the paved yard before the mourning-house, the bier carriers moving anti-clockwise.

There is an interesting little problem here: while clockwise movement is restricted to auspicious occasions and anti-clockwise movement to inauspicious occasions, on both kinds of occasion the subject goes round thrice. That is to say, both the mourner as well as the groom goes round *thrice*. How is it that the principle

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[1] The restrictions observed during the village-deity's festival vary from village to village. As regards the food restrictions observed on the fast day the general idea seems to be to avoid everyday diet and to starve oneself as far as possible. In some festivals only roots and boiled plantains are allowed. Steam-baked pudding (*putt*), a favourite dish of Coorgs, is prohibited in some places. Green gram *pāyasa* (liquid dish) is generally allowed except in a few villages.

764 784 of 'reversal' operates in some instances while 'identity' operates in some others? If the principle of 'reversal' had been consistently carried out in the above instance, the mourners should have gone round an even number of times.

White rice grains are used in auspicious ritual, whereas rice grains yellowed with turmeric powder are used in inauspicious ritual. This is not the same as 'reversal' though akin to it. It is called 'confinement' here: certain ritual acts are confined to mourning and they may not be performed on auspicious occasions.

A mango or *pavili* tree which is growing in the burial-ground, and green, is cut down for the funeral pyre. The *entire tree* has to be used for cremating the corpse. If a branch or twig remains over, a chicken is killed and cremated with it. It is inauspicious not to use up the entire tree. Similarly, if a grave which is being dug has to be abandoned and another has to be started, a chicken is buried in the former. Otherwise there will be another death in the house in the near future.

[824] The leaves of the *bainé* palm (*caryota urens*) are associated with death: on the day before *māda* a *pandal* is put up before the mourning-house and the roof of the *pandal* is covered with *bainé* leaves. The corpse is fanned with a fan of *bainé* leaves. Again, when a man without relatives wants to have his obsequies performed during his lifetime alone, a *pandal* of *bainé* leaves is put up before his house.

While *bainé* leaves are used exclusively in funeral ritual, toddy is used on all kinds of ritual occasions. Systematization has not been carried to the extent of confining *all* products of the *bainé* palm to funeral ritual.

Rice yellowed with turmeric is sprinkled all along the way from the mourning-house to the place where the corpse is buried. Usually a man sprinkles the rice with his hands as he accompanies the funeral procession to the burial-ground. Sometimes, however, the rice is put into a bag and loaded on a pack-bullock. Two tiny holes are bored in this bag and the bullock is driven behind the corpse to the burial-ground. The bullock may not be used for any other purpose subsequently.

On the day before *māda*, first-grade mourners offer to the spirit of the dead person rice mixed with curd, plantain, and *ghī*. A quantity of this mixture is carried by him to the 'sacrificial post' in front of the mourning-house and placed on the plank on top of

the post. After crows have consumed the offerings, the family 764
friend kicks the post awry. On the next morning he cuts it down 784
with an axe. The first-grade mourners pull down the stoves they
had erected to cook their food.

In the above ritual is seen the destruction of articles used in mourning ritual, and the purpose of such destruction is to ensure their 'confinement' to mourning. Things associated with bad-sacredness and pollution themselves become bad-sacred and polluted. Consequently, they have to be destroyed.

'Inversion' and 'confinement' underlie more funeral rites than 'identity'. But it is important to note that 'identity' also exists. For instance, the corpse, which is ritually impure, is made to lie on a pure bench in the central hall. Besides, its head is made to touch the south-western pillar.

XI

Almost every Coorg adult chews betel leaves and areca-nut, 276
and addicts chew all day. Lime paste is spread over the rough side 521
of the leaf and the leaf is put into the mouth along with small bits
of areca-nut. Frequently bits of *catechu* and tobacco are chewed
along with betel leaves and areca-nut.

At night, after dinner, the men chew betel leaves in the veranda, and the women in one of the inner rooms. A man or woman looks forward to this part of the day: there is no more work to be done and everyone is at leisure. Talk flows freely.

The chewing of betel leaves is also intimately associated with married life. The husband and wife frequently chew betel together. The wife applies the paste, folds the leaf, and gives it to her husband. Until recently, among the upper castes in south India, unmarried boys and girls were told to keep away from betel leaves and areca-nut. Indulgence in betel leaves was a symbol of the married state.

Guests are offered betel leaves and areca-nut both to chew 276
and to carry home. Failure to offer betel leaves to a guest would 574
almost amount to an insult.

Betel leaves and areca-nut are indispensable on any ritual 431
occasion. They must accompany every ritual gift or payment, 276
whether it is made to another person or spirit or deity.

The chewing of betel leaves represents full participation in 276
765

276 social life as well as a happy state. Mourners who have been with-
765 drawn from participation in social life have to abstain from betel leaves, and the ritual chewing of betel leaves is one of the symbols of the end of mourning.

On the twelfth day, at the burial-ground, mourners offer the dead man's spirit betel leaves and areca-nut along with meat and liquor. Each of them then takes a betel leaf and areca-nut out of the leaf-cup in which they are placed and chews them. When they come home the family friend hands to each of them a few betel leaves and areca-nut which they chew for a while, and then take the chewed stuff out of their mouths and throw it on to the roof of the mourning-house. This is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

It is pertinent to recall here that the second-grade mourners are given betel leaves and areca-nut on the eleventh day alone after the performance of a particular rite called *mēnguva*. The first-grade mourners perform the latter rite on the day before *māda*, but they are *not* given betel leaves and areca-nut to chew at the end of it as the most rigorous part of mourning ends for them only on the *māda* day, after returning home from the burial-ground. It is appropriate then that they should not be given betel leaves and areca-nut till the *māda* day.

A relative who chewed betel leaves during mourning would be regarded as lacking in affection towards the dead person, if not actually gloating over his death. It is not very easy to hide the chewing of betel as the mouth and lips become very red after chewing.

It has already been mentioned that there is a great difference, if not opposition, between the ritual treatment of the mourners and the corpse. Things forbidden to the mourners are offered to the spirit of the dead person. For instance, while mourners have to abstain from meat, liquor, and ~~betel and~~ nut, the spirit of the dead man is offered these articles. The mourners have to show their sorrow by abstaining from dietary articles which have come to stand for happiness or wealth or participation in social life. While the mourner denies to himself things that he likes or values, he offers them to the dead man's spirit to show his affection and regard. While the mourner abstains from chewing betel leaves, a paste made by pounding betel leaves and areca-nut together is put into the corpse's mouth. Later, the dead person's spirit is offered betel leaves and areca-nut.

If the ritual chewing of betel leaves takes place earlier than the 765
māda day, the chewing only confers partial freedom on the 276
mourners. The third- and second-grade mourners are completely freed from ritual mourning only after the *māda* day, while the first-grade mourners are freed only after performing the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual, several days, if not weeks, after the *māda*. The latter may chew betel leaves after *māda*, but they have to observe certain other mourning taboos till they perform the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual.

XII

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual consists in the offer of *pinḍa*, or balls of 765
rice or rice-flour, to the spirit of the departed person. The offerings 788
are made under the guidance of a Brahmin at a centre of pilgrimage. 783

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual is frequently performed on the first of Libra, or on the Shivarātri day. The former occurs in October–November, the latter in February–March. On both these days, which are regarded as sacred, people go on pilgrimages to various places along the course of the river Kāvēri, and especially to the source of the river, Tala Kāvēri.

The first of Libra and Shivarātri are not, however, the only occasions for the performance of *dīkshé uttuva*. It may be performed [777]
on a new-moon day. Generally, first-grade mourners perform *dīkshé uttuva* after the lapse of what is considered to be a 'decent interval'.

Formerly, first-grade mourners sometimes observed ritual mourning for as long as six months before performing *dīkshé uttuva*. This very rarely happens nowadays. The present tendency is to cut short the mourning period, but even now anyone who performed *dīkshé uttuva* before a month had elapsed after the death would be regarded as either wanting in affection or extremely Westernized, or both.

The first-grade mourners go to Bhāgamanḍla, where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. The men mourners have their heads and faces shaved completely, after which they bathe in the confluence. They then dress themselves in the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. Women mourners similarly bathe and put on ritual robes.

Each of the first-grade mourners then offers a ball of rice-flour mixed with plantain fruit, honey, and a small quantity of gingelly grains. The ingredients of this offering are sold near by, and they

765 are mixed and offered to the spirit of the dead relative under the
788 guidance of a Brahmin priest who is paid a fee for his services.

783 The performance of *dīkshé uttuva* restores first-grade mourners to normal ritual status. Until then they are ritually impure, though this impurity is not as great as that which prevailed until the performance of *māda*, which puts an end to the mourning of all except the first-grade mourners.

The mourners then go to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara and offer worship there. This is followed by a visit to the source of the river Kāvēri at the top of the Brahmagiri mountain. The river rises int wo small perennial springs, after which it disappears underground for some distance to re-emerge near Bhāgamanḍla.

One of the springs is larger than the other, and the mourners bathe in the larger spring, after which they offer worship to the very sacred smaller spring. The priests of these springs are Brahmins who live near by. Frequently a tiny representation (*āḷ rūpa* = man form) of the dead person embossed on a thin sheet of silver is dropped into the smaller spring. (It is in the smaller spring that the Kāvēri is annually reborn on the first of Libra, at the moment of the sun's transition from Virgo to Libra. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of south India go to the source of the river to witness the annual rebirth.)

[171] The Coorg custom of terminating mourning at a centre of pilgrimage is a general Hindu custom. It is one of the numerous points where Coorgs touch the general Hindu ritual idiom. Every caste, sect, and tribe touches the general Hindu ritual idiom at varying numbers of points, but some part, small or large, of the ritual idiom of each group has a more restricted spread. The number of points where the ritual idiom of a local group touches the general Hindu ritual idiom has a tendency to increase with time.

V

THE CULT OF THE *OKKA*

I

THE *okka* or the patrilineal and patrilocal joint family is the 596
basic group among Coorgs. It is impossible to imagine a Coorg apart from the *okka* of which he is a member. It affects his life at every point and colours all his relations with the outside world. People who do not belong to an *okka* have no social existence at all, and the elders always bring pressure on the parties concerned to see that children born out of wedlock obtain membership in their father's or mother's *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* is acquired by birth, and the outside [769]
world always identifies a man with his *okka*. His association with his *okka* does not cease even after death, because he then becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors (*kāraṇava*) who are believed to look after the *okka* of which they were members when alive. The ancestors are worshipped, and offerings of food and drink (*bhāraṇi*) are occasionally made to them.

Formerly the boys in an *okka*, all sons of agnatically related [857]
males, grazed the *okka's* cattle together, hunted birds, and played games. When they grew up all of them jointly looked after the ancestral estate under the guidance of the head of the *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* determines to a very large extent the 596
choice of a spouse. First of all, marital relations are forbidden 582
between members of the same *okka*. Where agnation overflows the *okka*, the taboo extends to agnatic relatives who are not members of the *okka*. Again, children of sisters may not intermarry.

The ancestral, immovable property of an *okka* was formerly 596
regarded as impartible. It usually descended from one generation 428
of agnatically related males to another without being split up in the process. Partition did, however, occur when every adult member of the *okka* wanted it. But such cases were unusual—at least that is what one is told. Both the difficulty of partition and the preference for leviratic unions added to the strength of the *okka*.

Offices like the headmanship of a village or *nāḍ* or temple were 596 622

596 hereditary in certain *okkas*. The eldest member of the senior
622 agnatic branch succeeded to the office in question.

596 Every high-caste *okka* has to send at least one man and one
627 woman to a wedding, festival, or a common village task like repairing a road, or weeding a temple compound; and all the adult males in an *okka* are required to attend a village dance or hunt. A defaulting *okka* is fined.

596 The members of an *okka* have to live together from birth till
829 death. They are bound together by numerous strong ties, and they co-operate in performing common tasks. After death, they become ancestors who continue to show an interest in their *okka* and demand propitiation from their descendants. The *okka* is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points on it. Coorgs themselves clearly state that the *okka* has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his *okka*. There is a great desire for the continuance of the *okka*, and there is no greater calamity than its extinction. When an *okka* is threatened with extinction certain traditional devices are resorted to to perpetuate it.

596 The ancestral house and estate are sacred, and even today a
[342] Coorg likes to have a wedding or funeral performed in the ancestral house. The unity and solidarity of an *okka* find expression in ritual. Its strength is projected to the 'mystical' plane.

An individual is normally identified with his *okka*, but such identification of the individual with his *okka* is in extra-*okka* contexts, and it does not at all mean that the *okka* in question is undivided from within. Normally the elementary families inside an *okka* are potential groups of fission. The principles of segregation of the sexes and the unity of the members of a generation which run right through Coorg society are also at work inside the *okka*, uniting some members against the others. There are also tensions between individuals, especially among the women members.

596 Every Coorg *okka* is bound by the ties of friendship (*aruvāmé*) to
572 another neighbouring Coorg *okka*. This is a traditional relationship between two neighbouring Coorg *okkas*, and it involves certain ritual and social duties. It is frequently mutual, and affinal relations between the two friendly *okkas* are common.

596 Formerly every Coorg *okka* had one or more Poleya or other low-

Formerly every Coorg okka had one or more Paleya or other low-
caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary 596
relationship, and between families and not between individuals. 567

II

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body 596
enjoying the bulk of the rights in the *okka*. Men, thanks to patri- 613
locality, are assured of continuous residence in the *okka* to which 591
they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal *okka* on marriage and become members of their conjugal *okka*. The men have a sense of belonging to the *okka* which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal *okka* on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time[1] for her to be accepted into her conjugal *okka*: only when her children are grown
up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal *okka*. 596

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of [842]
the *okka*. They are the means by which the *okka* continues to exist, and the continuity of the *okka* is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal *okkas* and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different *okka*.

A woman is not a member of an *okka* in the sense a man is, and 593
the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man's. There are 596
compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one *okka*, 562
whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal *okkas*. A girl is maintained in her natal *okka* till her marriage, or through-
out her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to [586]
return to her natal *okka* if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal *okka* if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for
a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she [688]
be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal *okkas*.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal *okka*.

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[1] Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her [582]
conjugal *okka*.

593 596 A person's rights in his or her *okka* are represented by twelve pebbles, euphemistically called 'twelve pieces of gold' (*pannarandachchi pon*). At marriage a girl loses most of her rights in her natal *okka* and obtains them in her conjugal *okka* instead. The bride's family friend transfers eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend. Eleven pebbles are transferred and not twelve. One pebble is retained by the girl's natal *okka* and this is because the bride retains some rights in her natal *okka*. She never loses them entirely. She has always a home from home. Her natal home is called *tā mané* (mother's home?), and a woman always feels tenderly towards it.

[606] A woman has a right to be maintained out of the funds of her conjugal *okka*. She is expected to do her share of domestic work under the guidance of the mistress of the house (*manépaṇikārti*). Not infrequently the mistress of the house is also her mother-in-law.

[422] [434] A woman is entitled to cultivate a patch of ground for ginger and turmeric, and to raise fowl and pigs, and the income from their sale is entirely *her* property which she may hold even against her husband or children. But she may work on this patch only after doing her share of domestic work for the day.[1]

593 596 587 The preference for leviratic unions helped in the assimilation of a woman with her conjugal family. The Coorg saw, 'I will not come down the steps I have climbed up', refers to the fact that once a girl entered her conjugal home she usually stayed there for good, marrying one of the brothers of the husband in the event of the death of the latter. A girl on marriage becomes a member of her husband's *okka* and widowhood by itself does not alter her legal status. She continues to be a member of her conjugal *okka*. In fact, if there are no heirs to her dead husband's *okka* she might be called upon to raise up seed for it by entering into '*okka parijé*' or '*makka parijé*' alliance. She is not permitted, however, to raise up seed for her natal *okka*. There was an instance of this in Nālknāḍ many years ago and it resulted in bitter hostility between the widow's natal and conjugal *okkas*.

593 596 Rights in a joint family are referred to as *sammanda*, and *sammanda* may be conferred or withdrawn. At marriage the bride acquires rights in the groom's house, and this is referred to as the

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[1] Similarly, in the non-paddy season, men could cultivate small patches of land for ginger and turmeric. But they could only attend to them after they had done their share of the day's work on the ancestral estate.

'giving of sammanda'. Sammanda refers to the legal aspect of 593
marriage, whereas *mūrta* refers to the solidarity aspect of it. These 596
two together make up marriage. *Mūrta* has already been discussed
at considerable length, and *sammanda* will be considered now.

III

The rights of membership in the groom's *okka* are conferred on the bride at the ritual of *sammanda*. The term *sammanda* is used both to indicate the rights of membership in an *okka* as well as the ritual in which such rights are conferred or withdrawn. The Koḍagi term is a corruption of the Sanskrit *sambandha* which means, 'connexion, relation; connexion by marriage, matrimonial alliance, relationship, friendship, intimacy; kinsman; friend; ally'.[1]

Usually, when a person acquires rights of membership in one
okka, he (or she) by implication loses rights in another *okka*, even
though such loss of rights may not be either complete or irrevocable. At an ordinary marriage, for instance, the *sammanda* ritual
only confers rights on the bride in the groom's *okka*, but this
acquisition of rights in another *okka* implies that the bride loses
most of her rights in her natal *okka*. When a wife is divorced, the 586
sammanda ritual that is performed severs the divorcée from her
conjugal *okka* and she automatically reverts to her natal *okka*. In 587
the case of a widow who wants to marry someone who is not
a member of her late husband's *okka*, *sammanda* is first of all performed severing her connexion with her late husband's *okka*. On
such ritual severence, she reverts to her natal *okka*, and *sammanda*
is again performed, conferring on her rights in her new husband's
okka. Between the loss of rights in her late husband's *okka* and the
acquisition of rights in her new husband's *okka*, she is a member of
her natal *okka*.

The two most important parts of marriage ritual are *mūrta* (part 593
of *mangala*) and *sammanda*. There are three *mūrtas* in an ordinary 596
marriage, two of which give expression to the solidarity prevalent 585
between the groom or bride and his or her kindred respectively.
In the third *mūrta* the creation of the new bond between the bride
and groom is recognized by the groom's kindred expressing their
solidarity with the bride and the bride's kindred with the groom.

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[1] Macdonnell, *Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, p. 339.

593 The two groups of kindred are brought together by the acquisition
596 of two objects of common interest.

585 While the *mūrta* part of marriage refers to the creation of a new bond between two individuals and the kin-groups in which each of them is born, *sammanda* defines and clarifies the new structural situation which has come into existence. It brings home to the participants that a new legal situation has arisen, that an individual has been transferred from one *okka* to another. *Sammanda* ritual is performed whenever such a structural and legal alteration is brought about. (See 'Table of *Sammanda* Rights' on pp. 173–5.)

1. The *sammanda* ritual performed at *kanni mangala* ('marriage of a virgin'), which is, incidentally, the most frequent type of marriage performed, confers on the bride rights of membership in the groom's *okka*.

[587] 2. (*a*) When a widow wants to marry a brother of the late husband, no fresh *sammanda* need be performed as no new legal situation has come into existence. The girl is a member of the second husband's *okka* even before marriage and she continues to be one after marriage.

593 When a girl marries in the *kanni mangala* way she acquires rights
of membership in the *okka* of her husband. This is a simple enough
596 fact, but in recent years the acquisition of property by individuals
421 for themselves and not for their *okkas* has confused the issue. A few
178 educated Coorgs have tried to maintain that a girl, on marriage, acquires only a share in her husband's share of the ancestral property, and consequently, when a widow marries the husband's younger brother, a fresh *sammanda* has to be performed. This is absurd. The whole idea of individual ownership of immovable property is recent in Coorg, and even more important is the fact that *sammanda* is more than the acquisition of rights in property. It is the acquisition of membership in an *okka*, with all its consequences, social, economic, legal, and ritual.

593 (*b*) When a widow wants to marry someone who is not a member
596 of her late husband's *okka*, she is first of all made to sever her con-
587 nexion with it, and such severance restores her to her natal *okka*. She is then given *sammanda* in her second husband's house.

[768] (*c*) The children of the widow are (usually) members of their *father's okka* except in certain cases which will be mentioned
593 presently.

596 3. When a woman is divorced she loses her membership in her
586

conjugal *okka* and reverts to her natal *okka*. Such reversion is 593
automatic and not conditional upon the unanimous consent of the 596
members of her natal *okka*. But if a woman has been divorced for 586
a grave offence, her natal *okka* might decide to have nothing to do with her.

4. Children of unsanctioned unions are referred to as *mai kaṇat* 848
makka and they do not enjoy membership of their father's *okka* as 596
legitimate children do. In fact, they are not members of any *okka*. 593
Usually, however, elders bring pressure on the lover's kindred to the grant of membership for the children in the lover's *okka*. But if this is impossible, the children are made members of their mother's natal *okka*.

If the children of an unsanctioned union and their mother are given membership in the lover's *okka* while both the woman and her lover are still alive it is called *bendu* (relative) *parijé*. If, however, the father dies before the children and their mother have been given *sammanda* in his *okka*, then the elders try to see that *sammanda* is given at least before the corpse is disposed of. Such a belated granting of membership is called *kuṭṭa* (funeral pyre) *parijé*. This enables the widow to take part in the funeral rites.

5. A boy from outside is adopted when there are no agnatic 596
descendants in an *okka*. *Sammanda* is performed, giving the boy in 597
question membership of the heirless *okka*. 428

6. Adoption is not, however, necessary if there is an unmarried 596
girl (or even the widow of a dead member) in the *okka* without an 591
heir. The girl is then married according to the custom of *okka parijé* 428
by which the children of the marriage become members of their mother's natal *okka*. The man himself ceases to be a member of his natal *okka* and becomes instead a member of his wife's natal *okka*.

The institution of *makka* (children) *parijé* is resorted to when it is 842
impossible to find a man willing to leave his natal *okka* and become 428
a member of the heirless *okka*. *Makka parijé* is a sanctioned union 596
between the daughter of the heirless *okka* and a man who, while remaining a member of his natal *okka* and performing his duties by it, also agrees to raise up seed for the heirless *okka*. He usually stays in his natal home and visits his *makka parijé* 'wife' only occasionally. The children of this alliance are members of their mother's *okka*. It is usual for the *makka parijé* 'husband' to have a wife married to him in the normal way and living with him in his natal home. The children of the latter union, unlike the children of

596 *makka parijé* alliance, belong to their father's *okka*. Thus the *makka*
872 *parijé* husband remains a member of his *natal* okka with a wife
728 living with him, and in addition to this he undertakes to raise up seed for another *okka* which has no male heirs, but has instead only an unmarried girl. He only occasionally visits his *makka parijé*
[837] wife. *Makka parijé* has the sanction of custom behind it and it has to be distinguished clearly from extra-marital alliances which are disapproved.

586 7. Children normally and usually belong to their father's *okka*.
768 Consequently the children of a divorcée, or a widow who wants to
587 marry someone not belonging to her late husband's *okka*, do not follow their mother but continue to remain in their natal home. In certain exceptional circumstances, however, the children of a widow or divorcée are allowed to become members of their mother's natal *okka*. The unanimous consent of the children's natal *okka* as well as that of their mother's natal *okka* is required in order to effect the transfer. If such consent is forthcoming from both sides the children's rights in their natal *okka* are ritually severed, after which they are given *sammanda* in their mother's natal *okka*. The marriage of the widow or divorcée subsequent to the children being given *sammanda* in her natal *okka* does not affect their legal status. They do not follow the mother into her new husband's *okka*. This would again require the unanimous consent of the members of the mother's natal *okka* and her new husband's *okka*.

Rights of membership in an *okka* are an extremely important
593 matter affecting all the members in a variety of ways, social,
596 economic, legal, and ritual. Both the loss as well as the acquisition of a member make a profound difference in the day-to-day interrelations of members. The granting of membership and the loss of membership both become subject to *sammanda* ritual. *Sammanda* dramatically brings home to the parties concerned the implications of granting or withdrawing membership. As *sammanda* is a public occasion, the parties concerned in it will not be able to go back on it at a future date. The ritual that surrounds the giving or withdrawal of *sammanda* rights brings ritual sanctions into operation.

IV

596
593 The most frequent form of marriage is 'the marriage of a virgin'
585 (*kanni mangala*), in which the bride leaves her natal *okka* and

becomes a member of the groom's *okka*. *Sammanda* ritual effects 596
the transference of the bride to the groom's *okka* and makes clear 593
the legal implications of marriage to everyone concerned. 585

The *sammanda* ritual is performed at the entrance to the kitchen of the bride's ancestral house. The bride stands inside the kitchen while the groom stands outside, with the threshold in between them. The bride's family friend and two of her kinsmen stand on one side of the groom, while the latter's family friend, and two of his kinsmen stand on the other side. The other relatives and guests watch the proceedings from a distance. The family friends utter the traditional *sammanda* formulas.

I give below a free translation of the Koḍagi text, and I should like to stress the fact that there is some elasticity in the formulae uttered.

Bride's Family Friend: 'The people of both the *nāḍs*, men of the house, relatives and family friend, are they all standing in rows?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'They stand.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'To the girl Pārvati of Nuchchimaṇeyaṇḍa *okka* whom we are about to give in marriage to the youth Muttaṇṇa of the Malchira *okka*, will you give the girl *sammanda* (rights) in the property of the groom's *okka*? Will you give her rights in the Malchira *okka's* land which yields a thousand *bhaṭṭis*[1] of paddy, in the ten *kaṇḍas*[2] of pasture, in the cattle-stand, in the ten pairs of bullocks, in the house, in the garden, in the ten milch cows, in the bamboo receptacle used for milking, in the cattle-shed where the cattle are herded, in the paddy-flat,[3] in the ridges of the paddy-flat, in the manure-heap, in the land which has silted up, in the paddy-field encroached upon by neighbours, in the runaway servant, in the elephant on heat, in the axe which, swinging, they cut, in the knife which, lifting, they cut, in the paddy in the granary, in the two-seer measure used for measuring paddy, in the seer-measure used for measuring rice, in the bell metal dish leaning against the wall, in the wall-lamp, in the stock of salt, in the kitchen stove, in the buried treasure, in the stock of thread, in the piece of cloth used for extracting thread, in the piece of iron used for making

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[1] The term '*āyira bhaṭṭi bhūmi*', or 'land which yields 1,000 *bhaṭṭis* of paddy is a conventional term and only means that the groom's *okka* is rich. [804]

[2] A *kaṇḍa* is a plot of land of a certain size.

[3] Rice is cultivated usually in small ridged-up flats or plots. It is very necessary at various stages in its cultivation to stand water for days, if not weeks, in the flats. [243]

596 needles, in the tiny *chunḍekka*[1] fruit, and in brief, in everything
593 from one to one hundred, will you give her rights (*sammanda*)?'
585 Groom's Family Friend: 'We give.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'On the marriage of our child into your *okka* our servants will carry on their heads goods worth a thousand *birāns*[2] in a box worth five hundred *birāns*. If this goes, who is the family friend to be held responsible for the loss?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I belong to Chīranḍa *okka*, and I am the family friend of Malchira *okka*.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Are you the family friend attached to their soil (*maṇṇaruva*), or have you been hired with gold for the occasion (*ponnaruva*)?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I am both the traditional family friend and the family friend hired with gold for the occasion.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take these twelve pieces of gold.'

[135] 'Pieces of gold' is only a euphemism, however: the groom's family friend is actually given pebbles. He is given only eleven pebbles, one pebble being retained as already mentioned.

Groom's Family Friend: 'I have received eleven pieces of gold. If your innocent child, the girl who is married to our boy, complains that the rice is too hot, or that the curry is too pungent, or that her father-in-law is abusive, or that her mother-in-law is niggardly, or that her husband is impotent, or that she cannot stay in her husband's house, or that her husband's people are poor, and thus complaining, she goes back to her natal *okka* and sits there, who is the person to be held responsible for telling her what is right and repairing the wrong, and for providing us (who have gone to fetch her), for our return journey, with servants for company and torches to light our way?'

Bride's Family Friend: 'I.'

Groom's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'

Bride's Family Friend: 'I belong to Appacheṭṭolanḍa *okka*, and I am the family friend of Nuchchimaneyanḍa *okka*.'

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[245] [1] *Chunḍekka* is a tiny fruit growing on a bushy plant used for hedging. It is a vegetable, and in the above context it means a thing of small value, or a contemptible thing.

[2] *Birān* is a corruption of *varaha*, an ancient Indian coin worth about Rs 3-8-0.

Groom's Family Friend: 'Are you the traditional family friend, or have you been hired with gold for the present occasion?' 596 593 585

Bride's Family Friend: 'Both.'

Groom's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.' He pays a *paṇa* to the bride's family friend.

Bride's Family Friend: 'If our young girl comes upon some misfortune, who is the family friend to be held responsible for sending her to her natal *okka* with servants for company and torches for the road?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

He pays a *paṇa* to the groom's family friend.

The ritual of *sammanda* is now over.

V

The transfer of pebbles is an essential part of *sammanda*. According to an old saying, 'the weight of a person in gold is twelve pieces' (*ponnu tūka manushya pannaraṇḍachchi*). The totality of rights which a person has in the *okka* of which he is a member is represented by twelve pebbles referred to as 'pieces of gold'. At marriage the bride's family friend gives eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend as most of the rights which the bride had in her natal *okka* have been given up and acquired in the groom's *okka* instead. One pebble is retained because the bride's connexion with her natal *okka* is too deep and fundamental to be totally destroyed. In fact, if the bride happens to be divorced later, she has a right to return to her natal home. As the old saying has it, 'when a girl falls upon evil days, she goes back to her natal home'.

Some Coorgs have taken the theory of the estimation of the value of the rights of a person in his (or her) *okka* rather literally. They argue that each 'piece of gold' represents the traditional estimate of the price of a part of the ancestral property and at the marriage of a virgin the bride's relatives buy up her rights in her natal *okka* and pay her the price. The bride buys herself membership of the groom's *okka* with the money she has acquired.

Pieces of gold do not seem to have been used in the past instead of pebbles. The use of pebbles is clearly symbolic and it enables the persons concerned to understand the legal implications of marriage.

593 The groom's family friend who receives the eleven pebbles
596 hands them over to the matron of honour who ties them up in a
585 bundle. She ties the bundle to the frontal breast-knot (*molĕkaṭ*) of
the bride. Just before the bride leaves for the groom's house this
bundle is put into the box containing the bride's trousseau.

Nowadays it is not usual for the pebbles to be kept for any length
593 of time. Neither do Coorgs regard these pebbles as sacred. But
596 elderly informants consider that the pebbles *ought* to be kept in the
586 groom's house and returned in the event of divorce or widow-
768 hood.

When a woman is returning to her natal *okka* on being divorced, or when a widow is returning to her natal *okka* preparatory to marrying someone who is not a member of her late husband's *okka*, the divorcée's or widow's connexion with her conjugal *okka* is ritually severed. This is referred to as 'giving up the pebbles' (*kallumbara kaipa*).[1] The bride's family friend and groom's family friend break the connexion in set formulas which are the same as those used in marriage but for certain necessary alterations.

In the *sammanda* ritual performed at the 'marriage of a virgin', the emphasis is on the fact of the bride obtaining rights in the groom's *okka*, and not on her losing her rights in her natal *okka*. When a widow or divorcée is returning to her natal *okka*, the *sammanda* ritual that is performed severs her connexion with her conjugal *okka*. In both cases, however, the loss of membership of an *okka* is accompanied by gaining membership of another. The difference in emphasis however leads to the one being described as the 'conferring of *sammanda*' and the other as the 'giving up of pebbles'.

Children normally belong to their father's *okka*, and they remain in their natal home even when their mother leaves her conjugal house on widowhood or divorce. Very young children, however, accompany their mother to her natal or new home, but they return to their father's house on attaining their third or fourth year.

When a divorcée (or widow who is remarrying into a different *okka* from her late husband's) is given permission to visit her children in their father's house, the eleven pebbles are not returned by the first husband's family friend to the family friend of her

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[1] The same ceremony is also referred to as 'kal mara kaipa', i.e. 'giving up stone and tree'. Stone and tree are said to stand for the estate of the *okka* in question. See N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 508.

natal *okka*. Her connexion with her conjugal house is, however, 593
ritually severed with the usual formulas. 596

In some rare cases the children of a widow or divorcée are given 586
rights in their mother's natal *okka*. In such a case the rights which 768
the children have in their father's *okka* are ritually given up before they are acquired in their mother's natal *okka*. The pebbles are transferred from the family friend of the children's father's *okka* to the family friend of their mother's natal *okka*. The adopted son similarly loses his membership of his natal *okka* and acquires membership of the adoptive *okka*. The *okka parijé* husband also transfers himself from his natal *okka* to his conjugal *okka*. Pebbles are transferred in both the above instances.

The conferment as well as withdrawal of membership has important results on the relations of the various members towards each other. The ritual brings home to those present the meaning of what is taking place. Publicity is ensured by the presence of a few local and caste elders in addition to the representatives of the *okkas* concerned. Such publicity gives the event a certain finality. Lastly, as the ritual takes place in a very sacred part of the ancestral house, before the domestic deities and ancestors, solemnity is added to the occasion which is also invested with ritual sanctions.

VI

Sammanda constitutes the legal part of marriage: for instance, 587
the bride will become a widow if the groom dies after *sammanda*, 593
whereas his death before *sammanda* would not have such an 596
effect on her.

It is usual for a Coorg widow to remarry. If, however, she is past middle age and has grown-up children, she does not remarry, but continues to stay in her late husband's house looking after her children.

A widow who wishes to remarry might marry either a brother, real or classificatory, of the late husband, or a total stranger. As mentioned earlier, there is a preference for leviratic unions among Coorgs, and where it is possible, a widow marries someone who is not only related as brother to her late husband, but also belongs to the same *okka* as him. In the latter event, no new *sammanda* is necessary.

The ritual conferment of membership has been described earlier,

587 and consequently only the ritual withdrawal of membership will
596 be described here. Set formulas very similar to those used for
593 conferment of membership are used at the withdrawal.

The ritual is performed in the central hall of the late (or divorced) husband's house. Two kinsmen of the widow (or divorcée) and the family friend of her natal *okka* stand in a row facing two kinsmen of the dead (or divorced) husband, and the family friend of his *okka*. The articles which the widow (or divorcée) brought with her to her conjugal house are kept in the central hall in the boxes in which they were brought at the wedding. The presence of the widow or divorcée herself is not deemed necessary.

The widow's family friend opens the proceedings by asking the late husband's family friend whether all the concerned men are present, and the late husband's family friend replies in the affirmative.

Widow's Family Friend: 'Muthamma of such-and-such an *okka* married Ponnappa of such-and-such an *okka*. Ponnappa was short-lived. Owing to Muthamma's evil destiny, she was not permitted the good fortune of living together with her husband for a long time. We will now take back your girl Muthamma according to the adage, "when a girl comes upon evil days, she goes back to her natal *okka*".'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'When Muthamma married Ponnappa, her servants carried on their heads goods worth a thousand *birāns* in boxes worth five hundred *birāns*. Whatever goods now remain, after having been eaten and worn, may I take them back?'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'I have received it. When Muthamma married Ponnappa she was given membership of Ponnappa's *okka*. She lost membership of her natal *okka* and you gave us eleven pieces of gold on that occasion which we now return.'

He returns eleven pebbles to the widow's family friend.

Widow's Family Friend: 'I have received them.'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'I have received it.'

The goods which the bride, now widowed, brought into her 593
conjugal house are then removed to the veranda. The widow's 596
family friend selects two or three pieces of cloth from the widow's 587
possessions and puts them into a box. He carries the box into the
central hall and says, 'Since our girl ate here we should like to
leave this box here'. The elders of the late husband's *okka* are
theoretically free to accept or reject this gift. But in practice a
definite sentiment seems to exist against its acceptance.[1]

VII

Coorg marriages are very stable, and divorce is not at all 586
common. In fact, an exceptionally able and well-informed elder
could not recall more than seven cases of divorce in the last fifty
years. The most frequent ground for divorce seems to be adultery
on the wife's part. Incompatibility between the husband and wife,
impotence of the husband, cruelty, and lack of thrift on the wife's
part are also grounds for divorce, though these seem to have been
very rare. A wife was expected to obey the husband in most [593]
matters, and she worked under the supervision of the mistress of
the house in matters of domestic economy, and consequently
incompatibility and lack of thrift became significant only in rare
cases.

Where a Coorg woman committed adultery with a member of an 837
Untouchable caste she was summarily thrown out of caste. 688
Adultery with a Coorg man was not as serious a matter, but still
far from trivial. In the latter case, her husband was certain to turn
her out of his house and her natal *okka* would be not at all friendly
to her. If, however, her parents were alive, they would offer her
shelter even though they strongly disapproved of what she had done.

The attitude of the public towards a divorcée is different from 587
that towards a widow. Widowhood is a misfortune, decreed by [777]
God or the result of *karma*, whereas divorce reveals a serious flaw 589
in the divorcée's character. This is natural enough if the woman
has been divorced for adultery, or lack of thrift, or incompatibility.
It is a woman's duty to adjust herself to her husband and his *okka*,

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[1] Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that where the widow has children by her first marriage and it is decided to allow these children to remain in their late father's *okka*, all the widow's goods are not removed to her natal *okka*. A good part is left in the late husband's *okka* because of the children. She takes to her second husband's house only a small part of her original trousseau.

587 and failure to do so renders her suspect. It is fairly easy for a widow 589 to secure a husband, while there is great reluctance to marrying a divorcée. Again, a widow is permitted to marry after a minimum period of six months have elapsed after the death of her husband, while a divorcée may remarry only after a year has elapsed since the granting of divorce. A widow is entitled to visit her children in their father's house, whereas a divorcée is not entitled to do so. Finally, a widow who has returned to her natal *okka* may marry again into her late husband's *okka*, whereas the doors of the former husband's *okka* are for ever shut to the divorcée.[1]

[589] But the divorcée and widow are alike in this, that neither has a husband, and a woman, normally speaking, should not be without a husband. An unattached woman is a threat to the stability of existing social relations and to the moral code of the community. The widow and divorcée are both regarded with a certain amount of suspicion.

VIII

593 594 858 The children of an ordinary marriage are members of their father's *okka*. The fact of birth confers this all-important right on them and no special ceremony conferring membership is necessary. In *okka parijé* and *makka parijé* unions, however, the children belong to the natal *okka* of their mother, and this is only natural as the object of such alliances is the continuation of the mother's natal *okka*, threatened with extinction for lack of an agnatic male descendant.

The important fact is that the children of a sanctioned union are members of an *okka*, either their father's or mother's, and such membership they acquire by reason of birth. But the children of an unsanctioned union do not have membership in any *okka*, and they have to be given membership in either their father's or mother's *okka* some time subsequent to their birth.

586 768 In those rare cases where the existence of very special reasons lead to the children of a widow or divorcée being permitted to be transferred to their mother's *okka* from their father's *okka*, the unanimous consent of the members of both the concerned *okkas* is regarded as essential. After the widow or divorcée has been ritually

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[539] [1] A Coorg saw says that one may marry a widow but not a divorcée: *keṭṭa poṇṇana bēvalu, buṭṭa poṇṇana bēvakdga.*

severed from her conjugal *okka* the children are also severed from 586
their paternal *okka*. While the widow or divorcée automatically 768
reverts to her natal *okka*, her children have to be given rights at a special *sammanda* ceremony.[1]

If, however, the widow or divorcée marries again, the children do not follow her automatically into her new husband's *okka*. They are members of their mother's *okka*, and the unanimous consent of the members of their mother's *okka* and that of the members of the mother's new husband's *okka* is necessary to transfer them from one to the other.

Elders usually make efforts to ensure that the children of an 848
unsanctioned union are given membership of their father's *okka*. 596
It is clearly recognized that he who had the pleasure of being 627
genitor has the duty of becoming pater as well, and this means that the children of an unsanctioned union have to be made members of the genitor's *okka*. Where, however, for various reasons the children cannot be given membership of their father's *okka*, they are given membership of their mother's *okka*. It is feared that if the children do not have membership in any *okka* people will refer to them contemptuously as 'the children born of adultery' (*mai kaṇat makka*).[2]

When a girl becomes pregnant as the result of union with a man not married to her, the girl's relatives press for recognition of the union. The man involved and his people might agree at once, in which case the girl's relatives have to go to the boys' home and give a feast to the relatives of the man and members of his village. The girl's relatives should carry with them all the provisions of this dinner, excepting mustard and salt.[3]

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[1] The *sammanda* formulas used on this occasion are fundamentally similar to the formulas used in other cases. That is why I have not described them.

[2] In the folktale of Kanniaḍa Kāmayya, the boy Kāmayya's playmates refer [539]
to him contemptuously as 'one who is without a father'. Kāmayya is greatly hurt by this and tells his mother that he will fast unto death if the identity and whereabouts of his father are not disclosed. His mother tells him that he is miraculously born, and that his father is the very sacred axe (*chandrāyudha*) which is a symbol for a deity.

[3] Among Coorgs as among other patrilineal and patrilocal castes of south [844]
India, a girl has her first confinement in her natal home. The first confinement is believed to be a dangerous and critical affair, and it is considered best for the girl to have her mother and other relatives of her natal home with her at this time.

During the fifth or seventh month of a girl's first pregnancy, her mother and other relatives go to their affines carrying with them all the provisions of a

848 After the dinner is over, the girl is given *sammanda* in the man's
596 *okka*. When the members of the man's *okka* agree to give *sam-*
627 *manda* after the girl has given birth to a baby, both the mother
and newly born child are admitted to membership.

Sometimes the agnatic relatives of the man might refuse to give *sammanda* to the woman and her children as long as both the man and woman are alive. But death of one of them might bring about a change in their attitude as the surviving spouse and children have important parts to play in the funeral ritual. If it is the woman who is dead, the giving of *sammanda* enables the corpse to be buried in the man's *okka's* burial-ground.

The members of the genitor's village who are present when *sammanda* is given should be collectively paid witness-money of a rupee.

The procedure which has been described above holds good whether the woman concerned is a spinster or a widow.

IX

596 A Coorg proverb says, 'When the cattle-shed was destined to
428 come to an end only bull calves were born, and when the *okka* was
585 destined to come to an end only girls were born'. As mentioned
earlier, an *okka* is threatened with extinction if there are no male heirs. If, however, there is an unmarried girl ~~in~~ such an *okka* she is married in either the *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* way. In both these forms the children born of the union perpetuate the mother's natal *okka*.

In the *sammanda* ritual performed at an *okka parijé* marriage, the bride's family friend definitely asks the groom's family friend whether in view of the absence of heirs in the bride's *okka* the groom is prepared to stand as 'the trunk' of the bride's *okka*.

No *sammanda* ritual is, however, necessary at a *makka parijé* marriage as the groom does not become a member of the bride's *okka*. A rite is performed which makes clear the implications of the kind of union entered into: the bride's family friend says, 'Since there is no heir in Muthamma's natal *okka*, Ponnappa of such-and-such an *okka* has agreed to unite with Muthamma, and it is the

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[844] dinner, barring salt and mustard. The salt and mustard are provided by the affines. The affines and members of the affines' village are invited to this dinner which is called *kūḷ beppa* (keeping food). After the dinner has been given, the girl's relatives take the girl to her natal home.

responsibility of Mother Kāvēri and the ancestors of Muthamma's 425
okka to see that the couple have sons, and prosper'. 596

It is essential to note that in a *makka parijé*[1] union the husband 585
does not acquire any rights in the *makka parijé* wife's house, except the right to food and clothing during his stay there.

Adoption is resorted to only when there is neither an agnatic 597
male descendant nor an unmarried girl in the *okka*. Formerly, 428
during the time of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, the ruler's permission was necessary for an adoption, and for an *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* union. This was because these devices could be used to shut out a distant agnatic male relative. But it is certain that the local elders would have tried to prevent an adoption to defraud a distant agnatic kinsman.

Two of the three devices for ensuring the continuity of an *okka* 596
threatened with extinction because of the lack of agnatic descendants involve the granting of membership to an outside male, while the third does not. But whether membership of the *okka* is granted or not, each of the three customary devices is enveloped in ritual and involves the gathering together of the concerned relatives, family friends, and villagers. The legal and social consequences of each device are made clear at a solemn ritual occasion held in the sacred ancestral house of the *okka* whose continuity is threatened.

X

The implications of marriage, its rights and duties, are made 585
clear at the performance of *sammanda* ritual. Most of the rites 591
performed subsequent to *sammanda* dramatize the transfer of the girl from her natal *okka* to her conjugal *okka*.

To begin with, the groom goes to the bride sitting alone in the kitchen of her natal house, performs *mūrta* to her, and presents her with a purse containing coins (*chila paṇa*). The groom ties the purse to the frontal breast-knot of the bride's *sari*, but before doing so he unties the purse presented earlier by the mother. Thus the purse presented by the groom replaces the purse presented by the bride's mother. The newly created affinal bond replaces the uterine bond. In a patrilocal and patrilineal society,

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[1] *Makka parijé* is not restricted to unmarried girls only. For instance, a widow might be called upon to raise up seed for her conjugal *okka* by entering into a *makka parijé* alliance.

585 when a girl is married she passes from her mother to her husband. 591 Her mother is the person for whom she has the greatest affection, and the replacement of the mother's purse by the groom's purse explains much better what happens than mere words can.

585 After performing *mūrta* to the bride, the groom helps her to get up, and walks with her to the door of the kitchen. He crosses the threshold first, and then, standing on the outer side of the threshold, he offers his right hand to the bride standing in the kitchen. The bride takes his right hand with her right hand and then crosses the threshold. This act symbolizes her exit from her natal home: the kitchen is the normal sphere of activity of a woman, and it stands for and is associated with women in the minds of ordinary people. Thus when the groom helps the bride to cross the threshold of the kitchen of her natal house, the participants are made to realize the loss occasioned to the bride's natal *okka* at marriage.

The bridal pair go in state to the groom's house. The bride salutes the sacred wall-lamp, and then sits on a sacred bench in the central hall, after which she salutes the elders in the groom's house.[1] Normally a woman may not sit on the sacred benches either in the central hall or veranda, and when an exception is made in the case of the bride it is as a recognition of the fact that she has acquired membership in the groom's *okka*.

Later, the bride goes with two married women to the cattle-shed where three new reed-baskets, filled with cow-dung, are kept. Each carries a basket to the groom's rice-fields and empties it in one of the ridged-up plots where rice is grown.

[778] Accompanied by her two companions the bride then goes to the domestic well. She worships the water in the well, and this is called *ganga pūja* or 'worship of the Ganges'. Each of the three women carries a vessel of water to the kitchen.

[862] The duties of a woman normally include carrying manure to the fields and fetching water from the domestic well. When the bride carries manure to the groom's fields and carries water into the kitchen of his house she is doing something which she will have to do every day for the rest of her life. She ritually takes up her duties in her husband's house, and frequently on ritual occasions two people accompany the subject in the tasks he or she performs. The reed-baskets are left at the field for Poleya servants of the

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[1] In some parts of Coorg she also salutes the south-western pillar and the lamp in the south-western room.

groom's *okka* to collect. The water in the well is worshipped before 585
taking a vesselful into the kitchen. (It was seen earlier that the confined woman similarly worshipped the well before resuming her contact with it after an absence of several months.)

At night, on the same day, the bride is given a new name by the [553]
women members of the groom's *okka*. This may be the name of a dead woman of the groom's *okka*. Even when the bride is not given a totally new name, some change is effected in her old name.[1] If the bride is divorced later, or if she becomes a widow and wishes to return to her natal house, at the ceremony in which her connexion with her conjugal *okka* is severed, the family friend of her natal *okka* refers to her by the name given to her in her natal house, while the family friend of the groom's *okka* refers to her by the name given to her at marriage. Thus the giving of a new name marks a change in the bride's social personality: she loses her membership of her natal *okka* and becomes a member of the groom's *okka*.

Soon after the bride has carried water from the domestic well into the kitchen, the groom's mother gives her a cup of milk to drink, or a dish of rice and milk sweetened with sugar. In some parts of Coorg she also combs the daughter-in-law's hair on this occasion.

In the patrilocal *okka* the relationship between mother-in-law 593
and daughter-in-law is very intimate and important. One might 606
say that in the first few years of marriage it is even more important than the husband–wife relationship. The fact of social segregation of the sexes operates against the young husband and wife spending any considerable time together before bedtime. Again, it is not thought proper for the young husband and wife to spend too much time in each other's company. Such a couple will be 'talked about'. A young man must attend to his work, must not encourage his wife to be indifferent to her share of domestic work, and must be respectful to his elders. All this means that he does not get a real chance to be with her till he retires to bed at night.

The daughter-in-law must try and please her parents-in-law: 606
this is one of the main aims of her life. She must do her share of the

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[1] *Akkamma* might be changed, for instance, into *Akkavva*. 'Amma' indicates [177]
girlhood while 'Avva' indicates womanhood. Some westernized Coorgs do not change names at marriage. The names of dead relatives are not very popular nowadays as they are considered old fashioned.

606 domestic work under the close supervision of her mother-in-law. She spends most of her time with the latter.[1]

The mother-in-law, too, has her duties towards her daughter-in-law, though in her case her rights vastly outweigh her duties. The ideal mother-in-law is one who is 'like a mother' to her daughter-in-law. She is expected to be kind and protective, and she is usually sensitive to what her neighbours and others say about the way she treats her daughter-in-law.

602 606 It was seen earlier that the ritual giving of milk is an expression of the solidarity that is, or ought to be, prevalent between the persons concerned. In the foregoing instance, the giving of milk (or sweetened dish of rice and milk) is frequently accompanied by the mother-in-law's combing the daughter-in-law's hair. Before a girl's marriage it is usually the mother, or some older female relative, who combs the former's hair and plaits it. Combing is an expression of friendliness. Marriage transfers the bride from her natal house to the groom's house, and the bride passes under the control of her mother-in-law. Solidarity rites are performed on this occasion. That the mother-in-law is equated with the mother is shown in her performing some of the duties which a mother usually does towards her daughter.

606 It is not correct, however, totally to identify the mother-in-law with the mother. The mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relationship is usually one of conflict and the reasons are not far to seek. The daughter-in-law has to obey and respect the mother-in-law as long as the latter is alive. Until her mother-in-law dies her social personality does not attain completion. Also, there is a struggle between the two women for the possession of the son, and this conflict is especially acute in the first few years of marriage. Frequently, the daughter-in-law's relatives do not help to minimize this conflict. The birth of children, however, reduces the intensity of the conflict.

XI

582 The Coorg *okka* is an exogamous unit. Sexual relations with a daughter or sister of a member of the *okka* are regarded as incestuous. A man may not marry the daughter of his father's

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[1] All over patrilocal India the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relation is recognized as a very important relation, and as basically one of conflict. See the author's *Marriage and Family in Mysore*, Bombay, 1942, pp. 191–9.

brother (classificatory): the father's first, second, and third cousins 582
are his 'brothers', and a daughter of any of these relatives is avoided
for marriage. Coorgs remember their agnatic connexions even
where they overflow the *okka*, and marriage with the daughter or
sister of an agnatic relative is avoided.

Every *okka* has a distinct name, a fact which helps in the avoid- 596
ance of incestuous relations. When a branch of an *okka* splits off 582
and in course of time becomes a separate *okka*, there is no inter-
marriage between the parent-*okka* and the offspring-*okka*. Thus
there are two Biddaṇḍa *okkas*, and there is no intermarriage between
their members as they remember that they are agnatically related
and that in the past they constituted a single *okka*.

Sometimes the possession of a common name by several *okkas*
does not indicate the prevalence of any connexion between them.
For instance, there are several *okkas* called Mukkāṭira, a name
originally acquired, in each case, by the founder of the *okka* hold-
ing a certain office in a temple. In such a case, there is usually
a prefix specifying which Mukkāṭira *okka* is meant: Kunjalagēri
Mukkāṭira refers to the Mukkāṭira *okka* of Kunjalagēri village and
not to any other Mukkāṭira *okka*.

A man is also prohibited from marrying the daughter of his 582
mother's sister (classificatory). Terminologically a man's mother's 601
sisters are identified with his mother, and their daughters with
his sisters. The mother's line may be called the 'buried line',
and it comes into prominence negatively in the avoidance of a
mother's sister's daughter for marriage, and positively in the latter
relative's being identified with the sister. Such accordance of
importance to maternal relatives is an attempt to balance the
enormous importance accorded to paternal relatives in a kinship-
system the foundation of which is the patrilineal, patrilocal *okka*.

The only relative a man may marry is his cross-cousin, his
mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter.
Coorgs, like other speakers of the Dravidian languages, have a
classificatory kinship terminology which accords with cross-cousin
marriage.

Cross-cousin marriage is preferred and common. It is of the 582
symmetrical variety though there seems to be a slight preference 539
for marriage with the father's sister's daughter as compared with
the mother's brother's daughter. A proverb tells us, 'The father's
sister's daughter's body is sweet, the juice of the blue sugar-cane is

582 sweet'. In the ancient marriage song which is sung at every marriage [539] the bride is made out to be the daughter of the groom's father's sister. An old saying tells us, '*tān banda baṭṭena marapakāga*' (one should not forget the path by which one has come): a woman is enjoined not to forget her natal *okka* from which she has come into her conjugal *okka*. One daughter at least ought to go in marriage to the natal *okka* of her mother. Such a system binds two *okkas* very closely, and the loss of a girl to an *okka* is compensated later by the return of the latter's daughter to her mother's natal *okka* in marriage. This is unlike the other variety of cross-cousin marriage in which one *okka* is perpetually recruiting girls from another *okka* without ever repaying.

582 The traditional preference for marriage with a cross-cousin 585 comes out in a rite which is performed at marriage. When the groom is leading the bride out of her house after the performance of *sammanda*, he is obstructed at the main door of the bride's house by the bride's cross-cousin. The cross-cousin says that the bride belongs to him and that he will not let her go. It is only when the groom has given him a gold coin that he lets the bride go. The cross-cousin adds another gold coin to the one the groom has given him and ties the two together in a corner of the bride's *sari*. The gold coins now belong to the bride. The incident is nowadays looked upon as a joke.

The preference for cross-cousin marriage expresses itself in 606 ritual, and there are structural reasons for such preference. Among 596 the patrilineal castes all over India, not only is the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law a common feature of joint family existence, the inability of the daughter-in-law to get on with her affinal kindred is frequently cited as the chief reason for [539] fission in the joint family. The Kannaḍa peasants of Mysore have a proverb, 'A thousand moustaches can live together, but not four breasts'.

The daughter-in-law is a stranger to the groom's kin-group and her interests frequently do not harmonize with the interests of the groom's kin-group. The latter want the joint family to remain united, and the bride obedient to her mother-in-law, and able to get on with her husband's brother's wives and the husband's sisters. The bride finds such an existence irksome, and she would like her husband to leave his joint family and found a separate household. Her kin-group are usually behind her in this, either

overtly or covertly. But there are other balancing factors: a girl is 606
told from childhood onwards by every elder in her natal household 596
that she should obey her husband and parents-in-law, and that the greatest thing she could do would be to be approved by her affinal kindred. Besides, a man is bound by the most powerful ties to his joint family; and even more important than this is the fact that he does not want to be known as the one who split his joint family.

Where an adult male is entitled to demand his share of the 582
ancestral property, marriage with a stranger girl increases the 428
chances of the division of the joint family. On the other hand, marriage with a relative makes such a division less likely. But among Coorgs certain relatives like the sisters and daughters of agnatically related males and the daughters of one's mother's sisters' daughters are tabooed for marriage. Only cross-cousins remain eligible.

As has already been mentioned, the Coorg *okka* is a very much 596
stronger institution than the joint family of the higher castes of 582
south India. The theory of the impartibility of its traditional property and the preference for leviratic unions buttress it strongly against fission. Add to it the fact that a cross-cousin is commonly chosen for marriage and it becomes almost impregnable.

The departure of a bride from her natal to her conjugal house on the second day of marriage is an occasion charged with emotion: I have seen an adult Coorg brother break down with grief when his sister left for her husband's home after the *sammanda* ceremony. Parents are aware that when they marry their daughter they lose her.

This breaking of the brother-sister bond which is inevitable in a patrilocal society leaves a void which is only filled when the children of the brother and sister intermarry. It may be said that the wound takes a generation to heal. This is only so if it is regarded as an individual instance, as the completion of a single cycle. But it is seen differently if each marriage is regarded as the repayment of a debt incurred a generation ago, as the working out of the principle of reciprocity. The links which are forged today by marriages between two *okkas* are only a continuation of the links which have been forged in the past. The individual instances appear only as points on two or more parallel lines which are linked all the way through. Such a view mitigates the sense of loss which the parents of the girl experience, and also gives them a sense of security as far as the girl is concerned. The prior kinship bonds which prevail

582 596 between the two affinal groups ensure not only the stability of the marriage, but also contribute to the solidarity of each of the two *okkas* connected by the marriage, and especially of the groom's *okka*.

XII

587 582 596 A woman is socially identified with her sisters, and a person's mother's sisters are identified with his mother. As sororatic unions are preferred among Coorgs, a mother's younger sister steps into the mother's shoes in the event of the mother's death before her sister's marriage. It is regarded as natural for the step-mother to hate her step-children, and a widower marries his dead wife's younger sister because he believes that the latter is more likely than anybody else to treat her step-children well.

A man's mother's sisters' children are regarded as his brothers and sisters. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter: such a union would be incestuous. The importance of the mother's sisters is stressed in their identification with the mother and in identifying their children with one's brothers and sisters.

582 596 It has been remarked earlier that the marriage of a girl causes a change in the established relations of the members of her natal as well as conjugal *okka*. The former *okka* loses a member, whereas the latter gains one. The members of one group have to adjust themselves to the loss of a member who was with them for seventeen or eighteen or more years, and whom they all love deeply, whereas the other group have to admit a grown stranger into their *okka*. This is the inevitable result of the rule of patrilocal residence. The marriage of a daughter means her exile from her natal home. But cross-cousin marriage ensures that the daughter in question goes into an *okka* with which strong bonds of solidarity already exist. Further, the daughter's daughters return to their mother's natal *okka* on their (former's) marriage, while the daughter's sons provide a home for their mother's brother's daughters. In other words, marriage with a cross-cousin minimizes the disturbances resulting from marriage.

604 [582] The maternal uncle is an important relative: he is the mother's brother, and represents the mother's natal *okka*. Perhaps he himself has married his sister's husband's sister—cross-cousin marriage is symmetrical among Coorgs. He is also likely to be father-in-law to his sister's children. But he belongs to a different *okka* from his

sister's son. His importance is stressed in ritual and in the exchange 604
of gifts.

A man whose maternal uncle is alive may not eat curry made of bitter oranges or green plantains. A proverb tells us that a diver for pearls must make certain that his maternal uncle is holding the rope above. Diving for pearls is a notoriously hazardous occupation [228]
and the life of the diver is in the hands of the man who is holding the rope above. It requires the greatest vigilance on the latter's part. It is significant that the maternal uncle should be chosen for this task. It is a tribute to the strength of bond between a man and his mother's brother.

The maternal uncle, paternal aunt, and the married sister are all 604
required to bring gifts, provisions, and sheets of cloth called *kēṭāmé* 585
at the marriage of a man. An informant told me that he remembered 431
his mother carrying twenty head-loads of *kēṭāmé* gifts to her younger brother's wedding.

A party bringing *kēṭāmé* gifts is honoured with 'plantain honour' (*bāḷé birudu*): the leader of the party is asked to cut with his Coorg sword a row of three stout plantain stems fixed to the ground. A man who cuts through a stem at one stroke is a skilled swordsman: the blow must fall at an acute angle and must be delivered with firmness and strength.

The bringers of *kēṭāmé* gifts are given in return token gifts of cooked pork and sweet dishes. The host's band accompanies them a little distance when they leave.

Those relatives who brought *kēṭāmé* at wedding bring gifts of 764
provisions and cloths called *aḍatalé* at death. They come accompanied by their band, and they are again given in return token 431 602
gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes.

Just before the corpse is buried or cremated certain important relatives perform a rite of segregation called *koḍa kukkuva*, the purpose of which is to break the bond between the dead person and his (or her) relatives. The relatives who have to take part in this rite are the dead person's spouse, eldest son, and 'cross-nephew' (i.e. a man's sister's son, or a woman's brother's son). The surviving spouse takes a mud pot, the son a tender coconut, and the 'cross-nephew' a bell-metal vessel with a spout at the side (*kiṇḍi*).

The three relatives march to a pond or well in the burial-ground 764
after the bier has been deposited near the funeral pit or pyre. 602
They have a dip in the pond, after which the family friend or his

764 602 wife places on the spouse's head the mud vessel filled with water, the coconut on the eldest son's head, and the spouted vessel full of water on the 'cross-nephew's' head. The family friend marks the forehead of each of these mourners with a few rice-grains yellowed with turmeric, and adjusts a ring of twisted grass on the ring-finger of the left hand. A mango leaf is put into the mud pot and another into the spouted vessel, while the eldest son is given a third leaf to carry in his hand. A hole is bored in both the mud pot and coconut to enable the liquid inside to trickle down to the ground from the head as the mourners march in state from the pond to the bier. The 'cross-nephew' has to carry the spouted vessel in such a way that a little water drips from it through the spout all the time.

The mourners go round the bier thrice, moving anti-clockwise, and at the end of the third round the spouse stands near the corpse's left shoulder, the son by the right shoulder, and the 'cross-nephew' near the feet. A little of the water in each of the three 'vessels' is poured into a dining-dish.

The three mourners then salute the corpse, after which they again go round the corpse thrice, moving anti-clockwise, sprinkling rice yellowed with turmeric as they go. After the final round is completed each takes up his original position by the corpse. The spouse touches the bier thrice with his (or her) pot and then smashes it to pieces by knocking it against the frame of the bier. As he (or she) does this, he utters the funeral cry, 'Thou art ruined . . . (husband, father, &c.)'.

The son follows next and he cuts the coconut into two halves after touching the bier thrice with it. He throws the halves underneath the bier and utters the funeral cry. The 'cross-nephew' who comes last repeats his predecessors' actions, at the end of which he throws the spouted vessel under the bier.

Shri K. J. Chenappa tells me that the pot represents the affinal bond which is destroyed at death, while the seed (coconut) is carried by the son who continues the *okka*, and the 'cross-nephew' carries the spouted vessel. He represents another *okka* which is linked to the dead person's by the fact that the dead person was a sibling of the 'cross-nephew's' parent.

[594] Husband and wife constitute a legal, economic, ritual, and moral unity among Coorgs, and the sense of this unity is so great that the surviving spouse plays an even greater part in funeral rites than the eldest son, who represents the dead person's *okka*.

The 'cross-nephew' stands for the solidarity of a man with his 764 sister. 602

Close relatives of the dead person bring gifts of white cloths 764 (*muri*). These cloths are carried by women and are received by a 602 woman member of the mourning *okka* who keeps them folded 431 behind the corpse's head. They are used for certain purposes at various points in the mourning ritual: for instance, the mourners of the first and second orders use them for the mourning uniform of waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth; they are used to cover the corpse while it is lying in the house; if it is decided to cremate the corpse, it is stripped of the white gown and then the body is covered with white cloths; and, finally, some cloths are given in charity to beggars and servants of the Coorg *okka*.

Relatives who bring gifts of cloth are usually accompanied by [533] their band consisting of horn, pipe, and drum. They also bring a rifle with them. As they near the lane leading to the mourning *okka*, all the relatives junior to the dead person dress themselves in a waist-colth and shoulder-cloth. In addition, the women mourners unplait their hair and allow it to fall loosely over the back and shoulders. They keep the gift-cloths on their heads and they [201] perform certain stylized movements with their hands which are suggestive of the beating of breasts and head, a common symbol of mourning all over India. As they come up the lane leading to the mourning house, a member of the party fires double shots. The band, rifle, and gifts of cloth are collectively referred to as *kellaṭi*. Relatives who brought *kēṭāmē* gifts at marriage are required to bring *kellaṭi* at death. The obligations of kinship require the bringing of such gifts at marriage and death, and such obligations are usually mutual between groups of kindred. In addition, the bringers of these gifts are honoured according to the traditional ritual idiom and given small gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes. These gifts are not equivalent in economic value to the gifts brought, but still they embody the principle of reciprocity. Reciprocity does not mean equivalence of return on every occasion: equivalence is usually achieved over a long period of time.

While other relatives bring white cloths, the dead person's 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' has to bring a gift of a red silk cloth (*kendanolli*). Red silk is more sacred than cotton, and the bringers of gifts of red silk are more important than those who bring cotton cloths. The 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' is required to bring

764 602 431 a gift of red silk cloth. The funeral song, however, tells us that both 'he who took and he who gave [daughters in marriage]' (*koṇḍavanu koḍtavanu*) brought gifts of red silk cloths. The divergence between [583] current usage and ancient custom can be explained by the supposition that cross-cousin marriage was widespread in the past. The custom of cross-cousin marriage leads to the overlapping of different kinds of kinship-bonds; and what was to begin with a cognatic bond becomes later an affinal bond.

602 585 When a man marries, his sister's husband acts as his 'best man' (*bōjakāra*), and when a woman marries, her brother's wife acts as her matron of honour (*bōjakarati*).[1] This no doubt gives importance to affinal kindred, but ultimately it may be looked upon as one of the numerous expressions of the solidarity prevalent between brother and sister. Again, it may also be an instance of the overlapping of several kinds of kinship-bonds, as the sister's husband or brother's wife might have been a cross-cousin before marriage.

764 602 431 *Saméya* gifts are brought by affines at death. These gifts consist of coconuts, coconut oil, puffed rice (*pori*), cooked meat, rice yellowed with turmeric, and three *kajjāyas* (a sweet dish) fried in castor oil. Mourners going behind the corpse scatter the *saméya* articles all the way from the mourning house to the burial-ground.

When a man is dead, representatives of his mother's natal *okka* have to bring *saméya*, and when a woman is dead, representatives of her natal *okka* have to bring *saméya*. *Saméya* is also prepared in the mourning house.

Saméya gifts stress the importance of the natal *okkas* of the women who have married into the mourning *okka*. They may also be regarded as giving importance to cross-cousins, as an affine is frequently also a cross-cousin.

602 585 Affines, when they are not already related to each other, are expected to be extremely formal towards each other. At marriage the groom's party are treated with extreme courtesy—warm water is offered to them to wash their hands and feet, a mat is spread for them to sit on, and puffed rice, coconut, and parched grams (*hurukulu*) are given them to eat. They are also given betel leaves and areca-nuts to chew. They come accompanied by their band. As they stand at some distance from the bride's house, a party from the bride's house goes to them carrying the articles mentioned

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[1] I attended a wedding in which the *bōjakarati* was the bride's mother's sister's daughter, but I was told this was not very usual.

already and accompanied by the band of the bride's house. The 602
leader of the groom's party is asked to cut down a row of six plantain stems, whereas other relatives are asked to cut down only a row of three stems. The bride's party is treated similarly at the groom's house later. 585

The fathers of the bride and groom do not meet at marriage. [574]
Within a year of the performance of the marriage the bride's natal *okka* invite the groom's father to a feast and the groom's *okka* invite the bride's father to a feast. This is known as 'knowing the relatives' (*bendu ariva*).

The formality which surrounds the relations of the affinal groups 602
lessens with the years. The two groups concerned come together more and more as the years advance and children are born of the marriage. But the formality never totally disappears. Distance and respect may be said to characterize affinal relations for ever. The earlier occasions in which they come together are covered with ritual—ritual respect is scrupulously shown, feasts are given, and gifts are exchanged.

Respect should be shown to parents-in-law, and this is especially 606
required from a girl towards her mother-in-law. A girl does not come very much into contact with her father-in-law, whereas she spends the best part of the day with her mother-in-law, working under the latter's supervision in or about the kitchen.

XIII

The parents of a girl have a right to recover the presents of cloth 768
and vessels which they gave their daughter at her marriage if the 428
girl dies without leaving behind any children in her conjugal *okka*. 421
But if children have been born of the marriage, the mother's personal property goes to them.

The legal position is not, however, as clear as we have made it [693]
out to be owing to the fact that lawyers trained in Hindu law have regarded the presents given to the bride by her natal *okka* as *stridhana* (woman's wealth), according to which the movable property presented to a bride by her relatives becomes her own
property absolutely. If such an interpretation is accepted, the 428
presents given by Coorg parents to their daughter at her wedding 178
will come to be governed by the same laws as those prevailing among high-caste Hindus all over India. This seems to be another

428 instance of the silent and effective transformation of an original
178 Coorg custom into a similar, though not identical, Sanskritic custom.

A girl ought to get married and become a mother, and a mother
584 is honoured among Coorgs. The bond between a mother and child
593 is the most intimate of bonds and this fact expresses itself in ritual.
846 While other relatives, including the infant's father, become free
from birth-pollution on the twelfth day, the mother becomes free
from pollution only on the sixtieth day. The stronger the bond
prevalent the longer is the period of pollution, and this is so in birth
as well as death.

766 When an infant whose milk teeth have not appeared dies, it is
593 buried without ceremony, and a half of a coconut shell containing
milk from the mother's breast is kept over the grave. Only the
mother is required to take a bath and change into pure clothes.

The special importance of the maternal bond is recognized at
593 marriage also: the mother is the first person to perform *mūrta* to
585 the bride or groom, provided she is not a widow. The mother has
to give her money-gift enclosed in a purse, and this is tied to the
frontal breast-knot of the bride's *sari*.

593 It is not only in ritual that the strength of the mother–child bond
538 is acknowledged: a number of proverbs testify to its strength. One
compares the motherless child to a crop in drought. Another tells
us that the father becomes a firebrand after the mother is dead. In
proverbs the mother is the tender figure and she contrasts with the
father who is comparatively lacking in affection and fickle. He can
be trusted only as long as the mother is alive, and once the mother
dies, his affection for his children decreases. He is likely to take up
another wife who will be the focus of his interest and attention.

593 The dependence of children on their mother later gives way to
626 great regard and respect for her, and this fact complicates the
husband–wife relationship. A man does not like his wife's criticizing
his mother, and even if he discovers that his mother does not
treat his wife properly he would be loath to intervene.

591 The bond prevalent between a mother and her daughter is
593 always a very deep one, and has a great poignancy because the
daughter, on marriage, has to leave her natal home for her conjugal
home. The mother is aware that her sons have all the rights,
privileges, and power in the ancestral house, whereas her daughters
have to leave their natal home and spend their lives among people
who will, to say the least, be critical of her in the first few years.

The daughter looks upon her natal home as a haven of refuge in 591
the first few years of married life. Her first confinement takes 593
place in her natal home because it is considered proper for the girl
to be with people with whom she can be at ease.

A proverb tells us that 'the mother's love for her daughter [539]
rendered her unfit to live with her husband, the sitting hen's love
destroyed the egg'. An overfond mother tries to drag her married
daughter away from her husband, and this might eventually break
up the marriage.

The elementary family, which is a part of the *okka* or joint 594
family, is weakly structured among Coorgs. This is because the
okka is so strong that it does not permit the elementary families
inside it to be strong units. There is no separate term for the ele-
mentary family.

The solidarity of the elementary family does not obtain expression in ritual. It is true that the affinal tie is very strongly emphasized in mourning, and the eldest son is a mourner of the first grade, and sometimes a younger son or daughter is also called upon to become a first-grade mourner. But usually the younger children of the dead person are not distinguished from the other younger members of the *okka*.

The fact that the elementary family is weakly structured among [178]
Coorgs does not mean that it has no solidarity; and in the last
120 years its solidarity has been increasing at the expense of the
solidarity of the *okka* of which it is a part. Coorg ancestral houses [592]
are large, sprawling affairs, and the members of each elementary
family within an *okka* occupy either a room, or a couple of rooms,
or an entire wing. Sometimes they occupy one of two or three
houses belonging to the *okka*. A member of the M-*okka* once told
me, 'When this house was built over seventy years ago there were
only two or three people in it. But our ancestors were so wise that
they built a large house with a number of rooms so that all their
descendants could live in it.' Now each of the married brothers and
his children occupy a room or a couple of rooms inside it.

The unity of the elementary families within the *okka* appears in 594
certain non-ritual contexts. For instance, parents take sides with 596
their own children against the children of another member of the
okka in the frequent quarrels of children. A proverb tells us that
'the *okka* went to ruin over the children's talk'. Quarrels arise when
'the children of the *okka* play together', and these children's quarrels

594 lead to the elders having an argument, an argument which might
596 later split the *okka*. Another proverb tells us that 'children's play
[539] leads to the *okka's* ruin'.

Marriage is very nearly universal among Coorgs, and bachelors
589 and spinsters are very rare indeed. A man's social personality is
fully developed only when he has married and become a father, and
consequently a bachelor is regarded as one who is not fully
developed.

It is believed that a bachelor dies with many unsatisfied desires
[762] in his heart. While a gold coin is placed in the mouth of the corpse
of a married man, a bitter fruit is kept in the mouth of a bachelor's
[725] corpse. A bachelor's ghost is regarded as mischievous, and the
ghost of a bachelor-warrior as even more mischievous.

[769] During the periodical ancestor-propitiations in a Coorg *okka*, songs are sung recounting the deeds of each ancestor. The name of a bachelor-ancestor is omitted from such a song unless he had proved an exceptional success in life, or had died while fighting in battle. Such exceptional qualifications are not, however, required from a married ancestor. A bachelor's personality is normally incomplete, and only the achievement of exceptional social importance can outweigh this fact.

581 Sanskritic Hinduism prescribes marriage for every adult. And
593 only a married man may perform certain important rites.[1] A man
and his wife constitute a single spiritual entity, and a wife shares
in the spiritual merit acquired by her husband. Sanskritic Hinduism also enjoins on the wife the duty of effacing herself completely
for her husband.

593 The strength of the husband–wife bond and the subservience of
783 the wife to the husband express themselves in ritual. When a Coorg
couple bathe in the source of the river Kāvēri during the Kāvēri
Festival, the ends of their garments are tied together: Hindus in
every part of India observe this custom when they are bathing in
a sacred river or tank.

593 Until recent years a Coorg bride and groom never sat together
585 for the performance of *mūrta*. *Mūrta* was performed separately for
the groom and bride in their respective houses on the first day of

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[1] A Brahmin friend of mine married soon after the lapse of the required period of a year after the death of his father because the performance of certain rites like the periodical offerings to dead ancestors and the worship of the deities traditionally worshipped by his family required him to be married. He was the eldest son of his father.

marriage. On the second day the groom's relatives performed 593
mûrta to the bride, and the bride's relatives to the groom; and 585
finally the groom performed *mûrta* to the bride. The groom and bride sat in different parts of the bride's house while *mûrta* was performed for each, and when this ended the groom walked over to the bride sitting in the kitchen.

Nowadays, however, on the second day, the bride and groom are made to sit together in the central hall of the bride's house while *mûrta* is performed for each. Some Coorgs call this 'double *mûrta*'—the English word 'double' is used by them. I learn that [176]
this modification of the original Coorg custom was introduced over thirty years ago by a Coorg who occupied a high position in the government of a neighbouring province. This modification is clearly an attempt to Sanskritize a Coorg custom.

A Coorg woman whose husband is alive enjoys a higher ritual 589
and social status than a widow. This is so among high-caste [301]
Hindus all over India, and the Coorg phenomenon may be regarded as an attenuated instance of the Sanskritic phenomenon. A Coorg woman whose husband is alive wears a necklace of black glass beads and black glass bangles, and these ornaments have become the auspicious symbols of the married state for a woman. No widow may wear them.

There is need to distinguish between a woman whose first and only husband is alive and another who after being widowed has remarried. The latter's ritual status is inferior to the former's, but it is higher than that of a widow who has not remarried.

A widow who decides not to remarry wears a uniform of a white [292]
sari, a white blouse, and a white scarf. None of these garments may have a coloured border.

In Sanskritic Hinduism a wife is expected to regard her husband 593
as her deity. Widowhood is the result of evil actions performed in 589
a previous incarnation. A widow is denied the ritual and social privileges of a married woman. She is not permitted to remarry. She is regarded as an inauspicious person.

Sanskritic Hinduism emphasizes the affinal tie in a variety of ways, but chiefly ritual. Ritual ideas tend to be all-pervasive. The worship of symbols of the married state by women, the ritual and social inferiority of the widow to the *sumangali*, coupled with the ban on widow remarriage, and the linking of widowhood to the idea of *karma*, all contribute to the strengthening of the marital

593 bond. It is obvious that among Coorgs, Sanskritic Hinduism has
589 had such a strengthening effect and has contributed to subordinating the wife to her husband.

XIV

596 At any given moment of time the *okka* is made up of a group of agnatically related males descended from a common ancestor, and their wives and children. When the older members of the *okka* die the younger members take their places. The dynamic element in the *okka* consists in the younger members succeeding to the positions left vacant by the death of the older members. The *okka* may be looked upon as a certain configuration of persons bound together by agnatic and affinal ties, and this configuration remains more or less constant over a period of time. The generation-depth of an *okka* might expand by a birth, or contract by a death, a segment may cling on or split off, but in the main there is a certain constancy of configuration which makes it an *okka*. The members of an *okka* come and go, but the *okka* goes on for ever. They are like people on an escalator, those on the bottom stairs moving gradually up to the top and finally disappearing.

An *okka* not only looks forward to the future but also stretches back into the past. Each *okka* has a distinct tradition with which its living members are acquainted. The 'house song' (*mané pāṭ*) sung at the harvest festival and ancestor-propitiation enables the younger members to learn the 'history' of the *okka*.

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769 The dead ancestor of a Coorg *okka* is called *kāraṇava*. *Kāraṇa* in Sanskrit means, among other things, 'the cause, instrument, origin, principle, the cause of being, a father'.[1] All the ancestors are not of the same rank: the founder of the *okka* has a higher status than the others. He is called *mūla purusha* (original man) or *ādi guru* (first preceptor), or *ādi kāraṇava* (first ancestor), and his higher status is reflected in the fact that at the periodical ancestor-propitiations a pig must be sacrificed to him, while to the other ancestors a fowl will do.[2] Also the Baṇṇa oracle dons the upper part of his *téré* equipment in the Founder's honour. For the others

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[1] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, p. 274.

[2] Pigs are also usually sacrificed to bachelor-ancestors who died a violent death, and to elderly males who died subsequent to the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation. But elderly women who died after the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation are offered only fowl.

he wears only the lower part, which covers him below the waist like 769 a skirt. The Founder is reverenced more than the other ancestors. 596 But sometimes the Founder[1] is outshone in importance by one of his descendants who was a famous fighter, or a commander of the Rāja's armies, or one of the Rāja's ministers, or a famous magician, or was noted for his piety. The Founder has a start over the other ancestors, but this start does not prevail against a very powerful descendant. Thus a Coorg carries the social importance which he achieves for himself into the world of his ancestors.

People who die on the battlefield, or who die a violent death, become *biras*, and *biras* are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors. The Karavanḍa, Biddanḍa, and Kaliyāṭanḍa *okkas* have [778] separate shrines for *bīras* called *bira kōṭé*.[2]

A man who is killed by a tiger or panther becomes a 'tiger spirit' (*nari pūda*), and at the ancestor-propitiation the Baṇṇa oracle paints his face yellow and marks it with black stripes or spots just before he is possessed by the 'tiger spirit'.

The wife of an ancestor is called a *kāraṇachchi* or *sōḍalachchi* or *toḍapijji*. It is believed that ancestresses are particularly liable to possess children, another instance of the Coorg belief in the strength of the bond which binds a mother to her children.

Every ancestral house has some place for the worship of the 769 ancestors of the *okka*. This might be a separate shrine called 353 *kaimaḍa*, or a low, earthen platform (*kāraṇava taré*) built round 778 the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. The *kaimaḍa* is a single-room shrine usually facing east, the sacred direction. When an ancestor-propitiation (*kāraṇava tére*) is performed, wooden figurines representing each of the ancestors, or crude figures embossed on sheets of copper or silver, or gold, or even slabs of stone with figures sculptured on it, are kept before a lamp lighted in the ancestor-shrine. The Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform an ancestor-propitiation whenever an elder dies, and on this occasion they have wooden

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[1] The Founder is usually a man, but in certain exceptional cases the honour may fall on a woman. In a certain *okka* in Nālknāḍ the men were all slaughtered in a fight over 160 years ago, and the only survivor was a pregnant woman who fled to the shrine of Pāyūrappa in Malabar. This lady gave birth to a son and returned later to her conjugal *okka* in Nālknāḍ. She is regarded as the Founder of this *okka*, and is propitiated annually at the end of the harvest festival.

[2] *Bira* is a corruption of the Sanskrit *vīra*, which means a 'hero'. In the Kannaḍa country memorial stones called *Iragallu* were formerly erected for heroes dying in battle.

769 representations of ancestors made which they deposit in the river
353 Kāvēri at the end of the propitiation. Sometimes personal posses-
778 sions of the ancestors such as walking-sticks or the small Coorg sword called *piché katti* are kept in the shrine during the ancestor-propitiation.

Ordinarily the ancestor-shrine does not contain sculptured images, or unhewn stones, representing the ancestors of the *okka*. But during an ancestor-propitiation wooden or other figurines representing ancestors might be kept in the ancestor-shrine. In those parts of Coorg where there are no ancestor-shrines, every house has an earthen platform built round the trunk of a milk-exuding tree, and a rough, unhewn stone embedded in the platform stands for all the ancestors of the *okka* collectively. An
[776] unhewn stone embedded in an earthen platform might also stand for a deity like Pūda, Guḷika, Kētrappa, and Nāta (cobra-deity).[1]

Some Coorgs consider that the ancestor-shrine or platform is built over the grave of the Founder of the *okka*, and that the cobra-platform is built at a spot where a cobra breathed its last. There is no evidence to support either of these views.

769 Ancestor-platforms are the rule in Kiggaṭnāḍ in south-east
353 Coorg. It has been mentioned that Kiggaṭnāḍ has a great deal in
184 common with Kannaḍa culture, and contrasts with Nālknāḍ and Kaḍiyetnāḍ in the south-west which are influenced by Malabar. The Baṇṇas and Paṇikas, masters of the technique of ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, are both Malayāḷam-speaking castes and their influence normally does not penetrate as far east as Kiggaṭnāḍ. The elaborate propitiation of ancestors, with the Baṇṇas or Paṇikas acting as oracles of the dead ancestors, does not prevail in Kiggaṭnāḍ: in the latter area propitiation is restricted to the offer of meat and liquor.

Ancestor-shrines or *kaimaḍas* are found in Coorg to the south-west of Mercara, but they are far from universal. Moegling, writing in 1855, tells us that only 'seven of the Armēri [village near Vīrārājpēṭ] houses have regular little temples where *kōla* or *bhāraṇi* is performed'.[2] Even today several prosperous and well-

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[1] All over south India village-deities like Māri are frequently represented by rough unhewn stones. The Coorg instance is only a part of a wider phenomenon spreading over south India, but there are other features which link up Coorg especially with Malabar and South Canara.

[2] *Coorg Memoirs*, p. 62.

known *okkas* such as the Koḷandēra, Maṇḍepaṇḍa, Maneyapaṇḍa, 769
and Koravaṇḍa have no ancestor-shrines. 353

Originally, odd stones embedded in earthen platforms built 184
round the trunks of trees seem to have represented the ancestors everywhere in Coorg Proper, but later the ancestor-shrine seems to have replaced the earthen platforms in certain houses. The richer Coorgs then seem to have increasingly taken to such shrines: Moegling writes, 'those who cannot afford to build a *kaimaḍa* make a sort of mud bank for the purpose called *kōṭa* under a tree in the fields where the family's first house stood'.[1] It is likely that the [558]
possession or lack of an ancestor-shrine soon came to indicate, in certain areas, the economic and social position of an *okka*.

The next step in the elaboration of the *kaimaḍa*-complex was 769
the building of special shrines for ancestors who died on the battle- 778
field. Yet another step was taken when a sculptured image representing an ancestor or an ancestor's benefactor was placed in the ancestor-shrine. For instance, the chieftain Achchu Nāyaka was helped by the Kannaḍa ruler of Piriyāpaṭṇa, Nanjunḍa Arasu (*c.* 1670), to regain his chieftaincy. The grateful Achchu Nāyaka built a shrine in which sculptured images of himself and his benefactor were placed.

In the ancestral house of the Kōdanḍa house in Kaḍanga Marūr village there are two tombs built over the graves of two ancestors who attained to very high positions in the service of the Rājas. These tombs have been built just outside the ancestor-shrine, and are crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, the 'vehicle' of Shiva. Tombs, and especially tombs crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, are very popular among the Lingāyaṭs of south India. Coorgs who were in the employment of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas borrowed the customs, manners, and ritual of their rulers.

During festivals like harvest festival, and at marriage, a little 769
meat curry and rice are offered on a plantain leaf to the ancestors. 782
A leaf-cup of arrack is also kept on the plantain leaf. The ancestors consume the essence of the offering and thereby consecrate it. All over Hindu India food, or any article which has been offered to a deity, is called *prasāda*, and worshippers have to partake of the *prasāda*. Food which is offered to a deity is later distributed among the worshippers, who eat it. Where flowers which have been placed

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[1] Ibid., pp. 62–68. By 'family's first house' Moegling obviously means the ancestral house.

769 on the image of the deity are given to a worshipper, he or she sticks
782 them in his hair, or keeps them in his pockets. When such flowers wither, they are either put in a well or pond or on a tree. They are not thrown where people are likely to tread on them.

[796] Quite apart from festivals and other occasions when the dishes cooked in the house are offered to the ancestors before the members themselves partake of them, there are special occasions when the ancestors have to be offered food and drink, and these occasions are the last days (*changrāndi*) of the months of Taurus and Cancer, and the tenth of Libra.

The propitiation of ancestors with food (invariably non-vegetarian) and liquor and lights is called *kāraṇava bhāraṇi*. There is also a more elaborate propitiation of ancestors called *kāraṇava téré* or *kāraṇava kōla*, at which Baṇṇas or Paṇikas officiate as priests and oracles.

This elaborate propitiation of ancestors is prevalent everywhere except Kiggaṭnāḍ. Also there is no uniform rule as to when the propitiation should be performed: each *okka* seems to follow a different rule in this matter. For instance, the Mātanḍra *okka* perform it annually in May, while the Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform it once every few years, while some other *okkas* perform it before a wedding in the house and still others perform it some time after the death of an elderly male. In the last case the object of the propitiation is to convert the spirit of the dead person into a *kāraṇava*. An old saw has it, 'The eleventh should be added to the group of ten'.

The propitiation is invariably performed at the ancestral house. The latter is whitewashed, colour-washed, and the floors washed with a solution of cow-dung. Nowadays the head of that branch of the *okka* which is resident in the ancestral house writes a letter to the heads of the branches living elsewhere, and to other relatives, informing them of the date of the propitiation. On the appointed day they all gather together at the ancestral house, bringing with
[585] them their votive offerings of fowl or pig or both. A daughter of the house who has married out might bring with her a votive animal to a *kāraṇava* of her natal *okka*.

The propitiation begins after sundown. Everyone takes a bath, and the head of the house dresses himself in a waist-cloth and
769 shoulder-cloth. If he is very pious he even observes a fast.
782 The Baṇṇas perform the propitiatory ritual in the central hall of
787 the ancestral house. One of the Baṇṇas acts as oracle (*tiruvaḷkāra*

or *boilchapāḍ*) while another, or two others, beat drums and sing 769
the house song of the propitiating *okka*. The song gives us an 782
account of the life of each ancestor and ancestress. The oracle wears 787
an elaborate equipment called *téré* which consists of two bamboo frames covered with red cloths. One of the two frames covers the lower part of the oracle's body, and the other, the upper part. The lower part is really like a skirt, while the upper part, which is flat and tapers towards the top, is tied to the back by means of a stout cord going round the waist. The *téré* is decorated with tufts and frills of the pith of *pāmbaḷé*.

The Baṇṇa oracle mimics the ancestor who has possessed him. If the ancestor possessing him had a game leg, the oracle limps about, and when an ancestress is possessing him he ties a scarf round his head in the way a woman ties it.

The possession has the quality of drama. Sometimes a certain incident which occurred in the past is restaged during the possession. For instance, *A* of *X okka* was in the service of one of the Rājas, and he was put to death by the Rāja's order. It is alleged that this was due to the machinations of *B* of *Y okka*. Now, when an ancestor-propitiation is performed at *X okka*, the Baṇṇa oracle who is possessed by *A* shouts, 'I was betrayed by *B* of *Y*. I have descendants to proclaim my name. *B* of *Y* has none.' The *okka Y* was about to become extinct through the absence of male heirs when a girl of the *okka Y* was married in the *okka parijé* fashion to a boy of *okka Z*. *Okka Y* no doubt continues to exist today, but through the descendants of a female member and not through an unbroken line of agnatic kindred. Agnatic continuity has more prestige than continuity otherwise achieved. Of course, continuity, however achieved, is better than cessation.[1]

A of *X* was induced to enter the Rāja's service by his father, who was a renowned magician feared by all on the Wynāḍ side of Tanḍra river. At the ancestor-propitiation mentioned above, the Baṇṇa possessed by the son (*A* of *X*) accuses the Baṇṇa possessed by the father of being the real cause of the former's death, for, but for the father's pressure, the son would no thave entered the service of the Rāja. 'Father' and 'son' start fighting with swords, and blood is

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[1] This incident makes it clear that a grave offence against the ethical code results in the ending of the offender's *okka*. It is surprising to note, especially in view of the existence of special customary devices like *okka parijé* and *makka parijé*, that continuity through a female descendant may be regarded as ineffective. [79X]

769 drawn. The descendants of the *X okka* who are looking on intervene and stop the fight.
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Sometimes the oracle, possessed by a particular ancestor, inquires into the state of the ancestral estate. He asks the members of the *okka* to take him to the paddy-fields, and he might even sharply criticize them for not paying sufficient attention to the ancestral estate. He might inquire after the welfare of the members of the *okka*. It is said that sometimes these oracles point out treasure troves.

The living members ask the oracle questions concerning the various matters affecting them. 'Will my child recover from illness?' 'Why is a son not born to me?' And so on.

Before a particular ancestor leaves him, the oracle goes to the ancestor-shrine, where one of his party sacrifices a fowl or pig. Liquor, parched rice, coconut, and plantains are all offered to the ancestor represented by the oracle. The latter eats the parched rice and drinks the liquor, after which the ancestor who is possessing him leaves him. He gets ready to impersonate the next ancestor named by the head of the *okka*.

The last ancestor to possess the oracle is the Founder, in whose honour the oracle wears the upper part of his *téré* equipment. A pig is usually sacrificed to the Founder. The head of the *okka* requests the Founder to bless the descendants. [62l]

On the next morning the sacrificed animals are cooked and the entire village is invited to dinner. Thus an ancestor-propitiation is also an occasion for the expression of the solidarity of the village.

[437] The Baṇṇas get as their perquisites the heads of the animals sacrificed, provisions, some cooked meat, and also a little cash. This is in addition to the fixed amount of paddy they are paid annually at harvest. The Baṇṇas in a village serve the Coorg *okkas* in that village or *nāḍ* during ancestor-propitiations and other occasions when their services are required, and in return for this they receive a certain amount of paddy annually. The relationship between a Baṇṇa family and a Coorg *okka* has a certain continuity and members of the former are well acquainted with the history of the latter. The Baṇṇa family almost becomes the repository of the traditions and history of the Coorg *okkas* it serves.

The Baṇṇa oracle is identified with the ancestor who is possessing him, and his acts and words are considered to be the ancestor's acts and words. In fact, an oracle is always identified with the

ancestor or deity whose mouthpiece he is believed to be. But 769
unbelievers are quite common among Coorgs, and an old man of 787
sixty-five had not seen a single ancestor-propitiation, which he 782
described as 'nonsense imported from Malabar'.[1] A sub-inspector of police considered both ancestor-propitiation and the worship of village-deities to be 'superstition'. Several educated Coorgs have told me they do not believe in ancestors and village-deities. The worship of fierce deities with pigs and arrack does not find favour with many, both Sanskritic and Western influences being opposed to it. Such opposition to propitiation of ancestors and village-deities frequently goes with a preference for Vēdānta of a kind. But still one comes across elders like Kuṭṭayya who tell you, 'they (the people) continue to disbelieve in ancestors till they get a knock on the head'. Repeated failure or illness makes a man go back to his old beliefs. Sometimes the Kaṇiya astrologer who is consulted says that the trouble is due to the failure to propitiate ancestors.

Sometimes a man or woman is possessed by an ancestor or ancestress, and while possessed, he or she might demand merely an offering of meat and liquor, or a full-fledged ancestor-propitiation with oracles, sacrifice of animals, &c. A person is identified with the spirit or deity possessing him, and consequently the demands of the person possessed by an ancestor are treated as the demands of the ancestor who is possessing him.

The offer of meat and liquor to ancestors as well as the elaborate 769
ancestor-propitiation are non-Brahminical and non-Sanskritic 782
modes of propitiation involving the offering of non-vegetarian food 184
and liquor. Also no Brahmin priests are present and no Sanskrit *mantras* are chanted. The non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation of ancestors contrast with the Sanskritic which consists in the offer of *piṇḍa*, or balls of rice or rice-flour, under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

Amma Coorgs, the highly Brahminized section of Coorgs, do not make offerings of curried meat and liquor to their ancestors. Instead, on a certain day in the year they offer balls of rice to the ancestors, and this resembles the annual propitiation of ancestors with purely vegetarian offerings and Sanskrit *mantras*, which prevails among Brahmins and other high castes all over India.

Both the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation

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[1] This particular person was very irreligious. He had not even gone on pilgrimage to the source of the Kāvēri.

769 exist cheek by jowl as far as the bulk of Coorgs are concerned. 782 The more inquiring of the men see the two modes of propitiation 184 as mutually inconsistent, but such an inconsistency does not seriously trouble anyone. All over India Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic customs, often involving beliefs regarded as mutually inconsistent, are found existing together. Usually, the non-Sanskritic custom either drops out or is transformed to suit the Sanskritic custom, but this process takes a very long time. There is also no doubt, however, that the non-Sanskritic customs of every caste as well as those of sects and peripheral groups are continually being Sanskritized. This has been happening for over 2,000 years all over India.

Splinter groups like Amma Coorgs are decades, if not centuries, in advance of their parent-groups: the former have solved their problem by Sanskritizing their customs entirely while the latter are more conservative. Sometimes the splinter groups are so far in advance of their neighbours that they incur the wrath of everyone. They might even be ostracized by the other castes.

XV

It has already been mentioned that every *okka* has a *nāta*, which 776 is a platform where unhewn stones representing cobra-deities are 778 embedded. Vegetation is allowed to grow freely around this plat- 562 form. There is a ban on women approaching the cobra-platform during their periods as the cobra-deities are extremely sensitive to impurity of any sort. Though women no longer observe seclusion during their periods, they are even now afraid of going near the cobra-platform because of the belief that its defilement would result in some misfortune to their *okka*. The angered cobra-deity [539] may be roused to bite a member. This is clearly seen in the ancient saw, 'The deceit of women is very great, O, Snake, please do not bite us' (*pommakkaḍa māya marmāya pāmbē, ariyaté tiriyaté koriyaté pāmbē*): a member prays to the cobra-deity not to bite even though it has been angered by women going near the cobra-platform during their periods. Women are likely to conceal such violations [783] from others, especially males. If they are frank enough to tell what they have done, purificatory and expiatory rites could be performed 776 to appease the cobra-deity.

778 Among Hindus all over India, cobras and the ant-hills in which

they live are worshipped on certain occasions. In south India there 776
is a belief that a cobra lives to a very great age, and that as it gets 778
older its tail becomes shorter. During the last period of its life it is said to develop wings. Coorgs share these beliefs, and some of them assert that a cobra-platform is built above the spot where a cobra ended its earthly existence.

All over India there is a reluctance to kill the cobra even though 776
it is a dangerous creature. Coorgs abstain from killing cobras [784]
found in temples and believed to be harmless, whereas they do not hesitate to kill cobras found outside temples.

The following incident is significant: *A*'s brother did not consider it a sin to kill cobras. He one day found two cobras copulating and shot one of them dead. Several years passed without *A*'s brother obtaining a son. Some Brahmins told him that he had committed a great sin in killing a sacred creature like the cobra and that he would not have a son till he had performed the necessary expiatory ritual. They further told him that the sin was so great that even after he had performed the expiatory ritual no more than
one son would be born to him. He duly performed the necessary [788]
expiatory ritual under the guidance of Brahmin priests, and later he made a pilgrimage to the great cobra-shrine of Subramaṇya in the Tuḷu country. Sometime afterwards his wife gave birth to a son, and together with his wife and son he again visited the shrine of Subramaṇya to express his gratitude to the deity.

Formerly, in the month of Scorpio, lamps were lit before the 776
cobra-platform every evening. In addition, in a few Coorg *okkas*, 782
a Brahmin priest visited the platform and worshipped the cobra- 184
deity, using Sanskrit *mantras*.

In the cobra-worship of Coorgs are to be found certain elements which are common to Hindus all over India, others confined to Hindus in Peninsular India, and yet others which are found only in Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg. The worship of cobras takes certain forms in Malabar which are very similar to those in Coorg: in the former area it is common to find in the houses of high-caste Hindus a shrine for cobras in the south-western corner of the large compound round the ancestral house. The cobra-deities in a house are intimately associated with it. The vegetation growing around a cobra-platform may not be cut down, and no one in a condition of ritual impurity may approach the platform.

In the Kannaḍa, Tamil, and Telugu countries, on the other

776 hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or
782 locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and
184 on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity Subramaṇya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subra-
[778] maṇya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya, some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly found in south India.

776 The identification of cobras with Subramaṇya demonstrates the
779 way in which Sanskritic Hinduism operates. The worship of
177 cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya provides a door for the entry of Sanskritic Hinduism. People who until then had only been worshipping cobras came to know about Subramaṇya, the son of Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramaṇya's birth, which is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to other gods like Vishṇu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya became popular, and these shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskritic Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskritic Hinduism.

776 Stones representing Pūda and Guḷika are frequently found in
778 the compound of a Coorg's house. Pūda is the Tamil corruption of the Sanskritic *bhūta*, which means a spirit. Pūda is frequently one of the deities in a village temple.

Guḷika in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He is also referred to as Māndi.

[761] Guḷika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see
[787] Guḷika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and
[789] Coorg show the position of Guḷika, and this is said to indicate when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take place in a Coorg's house it is customary to plant a stone called Mrityu Guḷika (death Guḷika). This is believed to put an end to the deaths.

Guḷika is different from Kūḷi which merely means a spirit or 776
ghost. Kūḷis are troublesome spirits which cause illness, possess
people, and have to be propitiated with offerings of food and drink.

XVI

The ancestral house has a special importance to a Coorg: he 596
regards it as sacred, he is bound by very powerful ties to it, and he 778
considers it the proper place where the marriage of a member 796
should be celebrated and where his funeral should be performed.
Even today the various branches of an *okka* gather together at the
ancestral house during the harvest festival and during the Kāvēri
festival. They also gather together for the festival of the local
village-deity which may be held annually or biennially, and for the
performance of ancestor-propitiation.

The house is swept and cleaned every day, and on special ritual [356]
occasions such as a festival or ancestor-propitiation, its walls are
colour-washed, and the floor washed with a solution of cow-dung,
a common purifying agent all over India. A festival is also a holiday,
and the men abstain from agricultural work and perform festival
tasks such as hanging up festoons of mango leaves on the lintel above
the main door. Everyone has a bath and changes into clean clothes
brought by the washerman. A festival also means a feast and the [262]
feast may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. All over south
India the feasts which are a part of calendar festivals may not
include non-vegetarian dishes—this is an idea implicit in Sanskritic
Hinduism. Non-Brahmins usually prepare non-vegetarian dishes
on the day following the feast.

Coorgs follow other Hindus in preparing purely vegetarian 796
dishes on festival days. Even the ancestors are offered vegetarian
dishes at these calendar festivals. But on those occasions which are
exclusively devoted to the worship of ancestors meat and pork
dishes and arrack are the preferred offerings to them. Some
village-deities again require offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and
liquor at festivals in their honour.

Another aspect of calendar festivals needs to be referred to here: 796
festivals such as the festival of arms and the harvest festival include 526
games like shooting at a target, running a race, throwing a 578
stone, &c. These games prove an occasion for the expression of
the rivalry that exists between the *okkas* in a village or *nāḍ*. Such an

796 occasion also canalizes the rivalry that exists in certain forms that
526 are not destructive of the social order. Coorgs themselves treat this
578 part of their calendar festivals as providing an arena for the expression of inter-*okka* rivalry.

Co-operation between *okkas* also receives emphasis at these
596 festivals. Every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) is required to send all
796 the adult males in it to the collective dances which are held at the
624 harvest festival. Again, there is a collective hunt at the end of the harvest festival (and usually at the end of the festivals of the village-deities) to which every *okka* has to send *all* the adult males in it. Failure to do so would result in a fine being levied on the defaulting *okka*.

When the festival of a village-deity is being performed, every *okka* (excluding *okkas* of very low castes) has to send a man to help in festival work such as clearing the weeds growing in the temple compound and on the road along which the deity will be taken out in procession.

There is also a minute division of the ritual tasks among the high caste *okkas* in the village. For instance, the representative of one *okka* carries the image of the deity, while the representative of another *okka* carries a lamp and the representative of yet another *okka* carries the money-box (*cheppu*), and so on. Formerly these tasks were looked upon as privileges, and an *okka* was jealous of the privileges to which it was entitled by tradition and custom.

The village is a unity made up of the various *okkas* in it. The individuality of each participating *okka* and the unity of all the *okkas* in the village[1] are both brought out in Professor Emeneau's description of a dance held at the festival of Bhadrakāḷi at Karavalébāḍga near Mercara. Professor Emeneau writes:

> this dance is performed on several days both at the temple and on the dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of each *sib* [*okka*] in the village, carrying each a *koḍi* or staff surmounted by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has the right arm bare and a fold of the turban hanging down his back. If all the male members of a *sib* should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the *koḍi*

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[1] Castes like the Poleya are excluded from this unity. It is recognized that such castes perform extremely useful tasks both in day-to-day living and at festivals, but their position in the social hierarchy excludes them from certain positions and tasks. The principle of stratification modifies the idea of the unity of a village.

must be carried by a member of another *sib* along with that of his own 596
sib. It is the *sibs* that are represented at the performance and individuals 796
who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential 621
part of the performance, carry no staffs, do not wear their dress in the distinctive manner of the *sib*-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance which is forbidden for the staff-carriers.[1]

The calendar festivals as well as the festivals of the village-deity emphasize both the solidarity and the individuality of the *okka* in a variety of ways. The games which are a part of some festivals give expression to and canalize inter-*okka* rivalry. All the *okkas* in a village have to co-operate in certain common tasks and games, but even this co-operation is on the basis of the acceptance of the *okka* as the nuclear unit of society. The participation of all the *okkas* in the common tasks stresses not only the unity of the larger groups such as caste, village, and *nāḍ*, but also of the unity and individuality of the participating *okkas*. This is clearly brought out in the dance at Karavalébāḍga.

XVII

Every Coorg *okka* has a relationship of friendship with another 596
Coorg *okka* living not far away. Such friendship is between two 571
okkas, and not between the individual members of them. It is 621
traditional and institutionalized. It is usually, though not always, mutual, and the headman and mistress of the friend-*okka* have duties, ritual as well as social, on occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. These duties are in addition to those derived from common membership of the village. (See Chapter II, Section XI.)

It has been stated earlier (see Chapter II, Section XI) that the 621
social stressing of family friendship offset the disadvantage of the 596
lack of any real neighbourhood in a village in Coorg Proper. But 357
isolated as a Coorg *okka* was, it was not completely without neighbours. Only they were not the right kind of neighbours. The Poleya or other low-caste servants of the Coorg *okka* lived in huts near by, but the few small Poleya familie scould not give effective help in beating off a raiding party from another village; and their caste prevented them from participation in the ritual of a Coorg house. They could only do menial jobs and carry messages.

The relationship between a Coorg *okka* and its servant families

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[1] 'Kinship and Marriage among the Coorgs', *J.R.A.S.* (Bengal), iv, 1938, p. 124.

596 357 621 has been considered earlier. The economic part of the relationship was certainly very important, but it was only a part of a total relationship which had several aspects. In Coorg folklore there are instances of a servant's great loyalty to his master, and of the latter's great affection for the former. Achchu Koṭṭa, a Poleya servant of Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa, threw himself on the funeral pyre of his master. Ayyaṇṇa was very ill when a caravan from Bēngūr set out for Malabar, and Achchu Koṭṭa joined this caravan against his master's wishes. Before the caravan had crossed into Malabar, Achchu Koṭṭa heard that his master had died. Torn with grief and remorse, Achchu Koṭṭa ran back to Bēngūr only to see the flames of the funeral pyre consuming the body of his dead master. Without a second thought Achchu Koṭṭa jumped into the fire. The members of the Kallumāḍa *okka* erected a stone in memory of Achchu Koṭṭa outside their ancestor-shrine. When an ancestor-propitiation is held in the Kallumāḍa *okka*, offerings of food and drink are made to Achchu Koṭṭa's stone.[1]

[765] Formerly, a man and woman from the servant family or families observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. The bond between master and servant was strong enough to find expression in ritual.

[56] The *de facto* abolition of slavery by the opening of coffee plantations in the middle of the last century, and the great changes of the last hundred years, have contributed to the weakening of the bond between the master-*okka* and the servant families. But even now, when a Poleya does a piece of work, the mistress of the house [461] gives him a small quantity of castor oil in addition to the wages (*kochchi*), paid in paddy. The application of castor oil to the head is supposed to have a 'cooling' effect on the entire body. Hard work, especially in the sun, brings about 'heat' in the body which needs to be 'cooled' by the application of castor oil to the head. The giving of castor oil by the mistress shows her concern for the health and well-being of the servant: it is an act of friendship.

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[1] *Paṭṭōlē Paḷamē*, p. 364.

TABLE OF *SAMMANDA* RIGHTS

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Serial No.	*Occasion*	*Subject of the rights*	*Where the subject had rights originally*	*Where now given*	*Remarks*
1.	The marriage of a virgin (*kanni mangala*).	Bride.	In her natal *okka*.	In the grooms' *okka*.	
2.	*The marriage of a widow*:				
	(*a*) To her dead husband's brother.	..	..	..	No rights are given as the widow already has rights in her new husband's *okka*. The recent tendency to give her rights anew in her new husband's *okka* shows that the elementary family is becoming more important among Coorgs.
	(*b*) When the new husband belongs to a different *okka* from her dead husband's.	Widow-bride.	In her dead husband's *okka*.	In the new husband's *okka*.	The widow's connexion with her dead husband's *okka* is first of all severed and this restores her to her natal *okka*. At her remarriage she is given rights in the new husband's *okka*.
3.	Divorce	Divorcée.			Her connexion with her husband's *okka* is severed and she then reverts to her natal *okka*.
4.	*Kolé aḍanga sammanda muripa*: when, in exceptional circumstances, it is intended to give the children of the widow or divorcée membership of	Widow or divorcée's children.	In their father's *okka*.	In their mother's *okka*.	Children normally are members of their father's *okka*, and only under exceptional circumstances are they transferred to

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596 586 *Serial No.*	*Occasion*	*Subject of the rights*	*Where the subject had rights originally*	*Where now given*	*Remarks*
	their mother's natal *okka*.				their mother's natal *okka*. Such transference requires the unanimous consent of the adult males of both the concerned *okhas*.
848 596 5.	Legitimization of a pre- or extra-marital *liaison*:				
	(*a*) *bendu parijé*, when both the parties are alive.	The woman concerned and her children.	The woman is a member of her natal *okka*, whereas her children do not have membership anywhere.	In the *okka* of the genitor.	
	(*b*) *kuṭṭa parijé*, when one of the parties to the *liaison* is dead.	do.	do.	do.	(*b*) The performance of *kuṭṭa parijé* enables the surviving partner to the *liaison* and the children to take part in the funeral rites for the dead person.
596 428 6.	(*a*) *Okka parijé*.	Son-in-law.	In his natal *okka*.	In his wife's natal *okka*.	(*a*) The consent of the son-in-law and of all the adult males in his *okka* is necessary to effect the transfer.
	(*b*) *makka parijé*.	do.	do.	do.	(*b*) The son-in-law retains his membership of his natal *okka* in *makka parijé*. The children of both *okka parijé* and *makka parijé* are members of their mother's natal *okka*.

Serial No.	*Occasion*	*Subject of the rights*	*Where the subject had rights originally*	*Where now given*	*Remarks*
6 (contd.)					
	(*c*) Adoption.	The boy to be adopted.	In his natal *okka.*	In the adoptive *okka.*	Only when there are no agnatically-related males may a stranger be adopted to continue the *okka* threatened with extinction owing to lack of heirs. The adoptive son loses his membership of his natal *okka* and becomes a member of his adoptive *okka.* The consent of all the adult males of the natal *onka* of the adoptive son, and the consent of the caste-elders is necessary for the adoption to be valid.

VI

THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

I

796 634 THERE is a considerable body of ritual directly referring to the *okka*, but this is not the case when we come to larger social units such as the village (*ūr*), *nāḍ* (each consisting of a few villages), and *simé* or *dēsha* (each consisting of a few *nāḍs*). These large social units were never as closely-knit as the *okka*. The festivals of the village-deities constitute an important source of information on these units, even though only a small part of each festival refers directly to them. Of the calendar festivals, only the harvest festival is important. The festivals of the village-deities, the harvest festival, and folklore are the chief sources for this chapter.

621 796 346 776 A 'village-deity' does not necessarily mean the deity of a single village. In fact it is common to find two or three villages combining to celebrate the festival of a village-deity. There is usually more than one deity at the festival of a village-deity. Every temple in a village usually contains more than one deity, one chief deity from whom the temple derives its name, and the rest secondary. For instance, the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi temple in Kuklūr derives its name from the fact that the chief deity in the temple is Bhadrakāḷi. There is a shrine containing her image, and the other deities in this shrine are Gaṇēsha, Sārtāvu (Ayyappa), and a *linga* (representing Shiva) said to have been brought from Benares. Outside the shrine, but inside the temple compound, are stones representing Ayyappa, Pattu Kūṭ Pātāḷa (literally, ten spirits of the underworld), and Kuṭṭatammé (the mother of Kuṭṭa).[1] Besides these, the Poleyas of Kuklūr keep representations of some deities worshipped exclusively by them, outside the temple compound on an improvised platform. All the deities in Kuklūr are considered to be subordinate to Bhadrakāḷi. Very frequently there is more than one temple in a village. In Armēri in Beppunāḍ, for instance, there are

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[1] Kuṭṭatammé has a temple to herself in Kuṭṭa in south Coorg. She is a famous deity and an annual festival is held in her honour.

several temples: one dedicated to Bhagavati, another to Mahādēva, 621 two to Ayyappa, and six to Raktēshwari (identified with Chāmuṇḍi). 796 The temples dedicated to Bhagavati, Mahādēva, and Ayyappa have 776 346 Brahmin priests who worship the deities by using Sanskrit *mantras*, whereas those dedicated to Raktēshwari do not have Brahmin priests, and pigs are sacrificed annually to her. There are two modes of worship, the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, and in the festival of a village-deity these two modes are found mixed in varying proportions.

Usually there is more than one temple in a village, and a temple contains more than one deity. The temples in a village might be either Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic, or might represent varying degrees of compromise between the two elements. Finally, a village-deity might also be the deity of more than one village.

The festival of a village-deity requires a certain amount of co-operation between the various temples in a village, and not infrequently between villages. For instance, the festivals of the various deities in a village are so arranged that they do not clash if not actually dovetail. The festivals of the deities Kētrappa and Chauṇḍi in Bēngūr occur at the same time, but they dovetail remarkably considering the elaborateness of the ritual that is performed. A kind of offering known as *térémuḍi* (usually a man wearing *téré* equipment) is sent by both the Bhagavati (in common parlance, Povvedi) and Chauṇḍi temples to the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day (which is also called the *nammé* or 'festival day') of the biennial Kētrappa festival.

A few miles from Bēngūr is Balmāvṭi, which has an important temple dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). This deity also has a very elaborate biennial festival, similar to Kētrappa's, but the interesting point is that the two festivals are performed in alternate years. When the 'big festival' of Kētrappa is being performed, Bhagavati of Balmāvṭi has a 'small festival', and vice versa. That is to say, this arrangement implies some co-operation between Begunāḍ and Ballatnāḍ. This is all the more surprising as formerly there was a [28] feud (*maradalé*) between these two *nāḍs*, and this feud seems to have been a long and bitter one.

There is another type of co-operation to which reference must be 621 made here. The Baṇṇas and Maléyas who officiate as oracles and 796 535 dancers (wearing *téré*) at the festival of Kētrappa come from the 791 villages Saṇṇa Pulikōṭu and Balmāvti respectively. The services of

621 Baṇṇas and Maléyas are in demand in surrounding villages, but
796 they manage to fulfil all their ritual engagements. Similarly,
535 Paṇikas from the village Biligunda officiate at the festival of
791 Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. These Paṇikas too are very busy people, serving as they do a number of villages. But the people of Kuklūr have ensured their services by giving them, in the past, an advance (*iḍu*) of Rs50 and two gold bangles. This is paid in addition to the customary fees paid after every festival. The payment of the advance guarantees the Paṇika's attendance and service at the festival. It is clear that the Paṇika or Baṇṇa or Maléya can only fulfil his engagements if the festivals do not clash with each other. The Baṇṇa is essential at the festival of a village-deity, and it is perhaps his list of engagements which ensures co-operation between the villages he serves.

796 The saying 'kētrappang pātradoḍanė', meaning 'the entire pot
776 of toddy for Kētrappa', testifies to the deity Kētrappa's great liking
273 for toddy. Part of the ritual of the festival of Kētrappa consists in fetching toddy from the Kopaṭṭi hills, about seven miles from Bēngūr. The Kuḍiyas (a tribe) in the Kopaṭṭi hills tap the toddy, and the festival-priests go to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day of the festival carrying new earthen pots (*kaléyas*) filled with paddy, which is the perquisite of the Kuḍiyas. These pots are brought back on the sixteenth day, and toddy is offered to Kētrappa and other deities in Bēngūr on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days. The Kuḍiyas visit the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day to offer their homage to the deity, watch the ritual, and receive a share of meat and toddy.

Every priestly (*kāvukāra*) *okka* in Bēngūr sends at least one representative to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day. They all leave the village at about 4 a.m., after taking a bath in cold water and donning ritually pure robes. They are in a condition of purity and other villagers may not look at them till they have crossed the boundary of the village. Both when they go to deposit the pots and to bring back the pots full with toddy some esoteric ritual takes
[787] place in the Kopaṭṭi hills. The festival-priests are very secretive about it, but I learn that all the ritual centres round the possession of a Kuḍiya oracle by Ayyappa, a deity of the Kuḍiyas in the Kopaṭṭi hills.

796 The festival necessarily implies co-operation between Bēngūr people and a hill tribe living in inaccessible hills covered with

heavy jungle. A festival of a village-deity usually implies co- 796
operation with the people of another village or *nāḍ*, or with certain castes or tribes living in different villages or *nāḍs*.

II

Village-deities are an All-India phenomenon. By this it is 101
meant that the deities who are worshipped in villages in various 776
parts of India have more or less the same character and attributes, and that the technique of propitiating them is broadly similar. These statements no doubt sound vague and general, but any attempt to make them more precise will have to take account of exceptions at every point.

While the phenomenon is broadly similar all over India, there are important regional variations. Generally speaking, within India, each region or district has a greater unity than the larger area of which it is a part. Inside peninsular India, for instance, each linguistic area represents an area of greater cultural homogeneity and social solidarity. But there are also cultural forms which are common to two or more linguistic areas. Malayāḷam and Tamil areas have certain cultural forms in common; and similarly Kannaḍa, Telugu, and Marāṭhi areas have some cultural forms in common. Within each linguistic area too there are differences: cultural forms present in the centre of a linguistic area might not be present in the peripheral regions or present only in an altered form. Geographical barriers also usually represent cultural barriers. For instance, cultural forms found in the Malabar littoral strip have great difficulty in spreading into the mainland of peninsular India. A country like Coorg, which lies at the periphery of three linguistic areas, Kannaḍa, Malayāḷam, and Tuḷu, has certain cultural forms in common with each of them.

Throughout peninsular India village-deities are represented by 171
unhewn stones or by crude images of stone or wood. They are 778
either housed in shrines which are usually not very elaborate, or 782
simply embedded in the earth without any roof above them. A shrine dedicated to a village-deity is frequently found either at the foot of a tree or in the shade of a grove. Worship may or may not be offered daily at these shrines. There is no uniform rule applicable in this matter. Practice varies from village to village, and even from temple to temple: in some temples worship (*pūja*) is

171 offered every day, in others once a week, while still others come to
778 life only annually or once every few years, when the festival of the
782 deity is being celebrated. Such a festival usually lasts several days
[785] and culminates in the sacrifice of fowl, sheep, goats, and buffaloes.
Devotees walk barefoot across fire, gash themselves with swords,
[789] and so on, on the last day of the festival.

171/793 While the priests at the Sanskritic temples are usually[1] Brahmins, men belonging to one of the non-Brahmin castes are frequently priests at the temples dedicated to village-deities. Here again practice varies from region to region, village to village, and temple to temple. For instance, in Coorg, Brahmins from South Canara are commonly priests at temples dedicated to village-deities. In Mysore and the Tamil country, on the other hand, a member of a non-Brahmin caste is normally priest at the temple of a village-deity.

171 776 [164] Throughout peninsular India, excluding Kēraḷa, Māri is a common village-deity. She presides over epidemic diseases such as plague, smallpox, and cholera, which usually occur in summer. The propitiation of Māri with offerings and festival takes place in summer, and also whenever plague or cholera or smallpox breaks out.

Village-deities in peninsular India are frequently females. This is specially true of the area east of the Western Ghats. Ellamma (literally 'boundary-mother') is a familiar deity in Telugu and Tamil villages. Kāḷi is another familiar goddess.

All village-deities are not, however, goddesses: there are also gods. Ayyanār, for instance, is a very popular god in Tamil villages and he keeps watch on the village when the villagers are asleep. Birēdēvaru is a popular god in Kannaḍa villages.

171 782 All over peninsular India, with the exception of the Malayāḷam-speaking areas, bull buffaloes are favourite animals for sacrifice to village-deities. In the Malayāḷam-speaking areas, however, the favourite animals for sacrifice are the pig, goat, sheep, and fowl. The south-western part of Coorg shares numerous cultural forms with Malabar, and there the bull buffalo is not sacrificed to village-deities. In the eastern and northern parts, however, buffaloes are sacrificed to village-deities, especially Māri. But

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[1] I say 'usually' and not 'invariably' because sometimes there are non-Brahmin priests at the shrines of Sanskritic deities. For instance, in many temples dedicated to Shiva in one or other of his numerous forms there are Lingāyat priests.

several years ago, in some villages near Mercara, Coorgs success- 171
fully opposed the sacrifice of bull buffaloes to Māri on the ground 182
that buffaloes were the same as cows and the slaughter of cows (and oxen) should not be allowed under any circumstances. It is interesting to note that elsewhere in south India a similar reverence for cattle did not prevent the sacrifice of bull buffaloes to village-deities. Very recently, however, the local leaders of the Indian National Congress have been everywhere more or less successfully opposing the propitiation of village-deities with blood-offerings.

The most common village-deities in Coorg are Bhagavati 776
(Povvedi) and Ayyappa (or Shasta). The former is male and the 171
latter female. Several other deities such as Chaunḍi or Chāmunḍi (f.), 533
Kāḷi, (f.), and Kētrappa (or Kshētrapāla (m.)) are also occasionally found as village-deities.

All the above deities are also commonly found in Malabar and South Canara. The traditional songs which are sung in Coorg at the festivals of village-deities make the latter out to be immigrants from Malabar or South Canara.[1] In these folksongs an important deity coming from Malabar or South Canara into Coorg usually brings with him a few minor deities who meet him on the way and beg of him to find them shelter in Coorg. Sometimes deities who come from Malabar go round to the established temples in Coorg such as the source of the river Kāvēri, and Sārtāvu (Ayyappa) temple in Makki, the Subramaṇya temple at Pāḍi, &c., and beg one of these latter deities for shelter.

The song sung at the festival of Kētrappa tells the story of the coming of Kētrappa into Bēngūr from Malabar: a party of Bēngūr youths led by Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa go in a caravan to Māḍāyi in Malabar, and the leader is possessed by the deity Kētrappa while returning to Coorg after selling the rice carried by the caravan. The song tells us that a number of deities, viz. Pattu Kūṭ Pātāḷa, Povvedi (or Bhagavati), Chaunḍi, and Pūda request Kētrappa (represented by his oracle Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa) to grant them shelter. Kētrappa promises them shelter and settles them in Bēngūr and surrounding places such as Ivattu-okkalu, Heravanāḍ, and the Kopaṭṭi Hills.

It is obvious that these folksongs cannot be treated as accurate

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[1] Frequently the songs tell us that a group of deities set out from the mythical Milk Sea. It is interesting to note that in such cases they reach some town on the Malabar Coast first and then proceed to Coorg.

776 historical records. Contradictions occur quite frequently in them.
171 And it is also clear that they are Coorg attempts at 'explain-
533 ing' the fact of the existence of a number of deities in the villages with which they deal. These various deities and their festivals are brought into relation with each other, and one of the deities made out to be the leader of the rest. In another song this leadership might be claimed for a different deity in a different village.

It is clear from these songs that not only do Coorg, Malabar, and South Canara share certain common cultural and ritual forms, but that some of these have come from Malabar and South Canara into Coorg. The fact that Tuḷu-speaking Brahmins from South Canara are priests at very many temples in Coorg, and that Coorgs had (and have) considerable respect for them, helped the spread of Tuḷu and Sanskritic cultural and ritual forms in Coorg. Similarly, the Kaṇiya (astrologer) and Baṇṇa and Paṇika were responsible for the spread of Malayāḷam and Sanskritic cultural and ritual forms in Coorg. This does not mean that Malayāḷam and Tuḷu areas do not have some cultural forms in common. Nor does it mean that the cultural and ritual forms found among Coorgs should always, or even in the majority of cases, be attributed to diffusion from without.

177 Formerly, Coorgs used to go to Malabar to learn medicine and magic, and such Coorgs, on their return, seem to have exercised considerable influence and power over their countrymen. The ancestor of the Ajjikuṭṭira *okka*, Kaliyāṭaṇḍa Ponnappa (alias Ajjappa), and Chendappanḍa Kungu are all reputed to have learnt magic and medicine in Malabar, and after their death they became
437 culture-heroes. It should be remembered in this connexion that formerly a few Coorgs from every village in south-west Coorg went annually in caravans to Malabar to sell their rice in exchange for goods which they wanted. These trade expeditions also resulted in the spread of cultural forms from one area to another.

776 A deity is commonly known by reference to the village in which he has a shrine. For instance, Pannangālatammé is the 'Mother of the village Pannangāla', Pālūrappa is the 'Father of the village Pālūr', Tumbémalédēra is the 'Lord of the Tumbé hill', and so on. Even where a deity is referred to by his or her name, a prefix is usually added stating to which village the particular deity belongs: for instance, Povvedi of Ballatnāḍ is usually referred to as Ballatnāḍ Povvedi, Bhadrakāḷi of Kunda is referred to as Kundat Bhadrakāḷi,

Sārtāvu of Makki is referred to as Makki Sārtāvu, and so on. 776 Frequently, the name by which a deity is popularly known gives no clue as to his Sanskritic affiliations: the deity Pālūrappa is said to be 'really' Vishṇu, but he is ordinarily referred to by the former name. Kuṭṭatammé means the 'Mother of Kuṭṭa' (a village in south Coorg), and this is the name by which the deity is popularly known. The deity's 'real' name is Karīn Kāḷi (Black Kāḷi), who is identified with one of the manifestations or forms of Parvati, wife of Shiva.

But it is not always that the popular name hides the Sanskritic affiliations of a deity: Bhadrakāḷi, Chāmunḍi, Povvẹdi (Bhagavati), Mādēva (Mahādēva), &c., have obvious Sanskritic affiliations, though such affiliations may not be known to all or even most of the devotees.

Nowhere in India are the village-deities regarded as gentle. 171 This applies to Coorg too. The deity Madērappa settles down in 776 the village Madé, and immediately flowers wither, sown seeds fail to sprout, and babies die in cradles. Another village-deity says that she will reward those who propitiate her and shoot an arrow at those who refuse to. In return for propitiation the deities keep [164] away from the village and *nāḍ* epidemics such as plague, cholera, and smallpox, and grant children, good crops, and longevity. They also offer protection from ghosts and minor spirits who possess and harm human beings. The oracle of the deity acts as exorcist at the festival of the deity.

Sanskritic Hinduism, which is also All-India Hinduism, makes out village gods to be manifestations of Shiva, and village goddesses to be manifestations of Shiva's wife, Pārvati. The implications of such a systematization will be considered later.

III

The domestic and temple architecture of Coorgs seems to have 346 been modelled on that of Malabar. This is only natural as most of the artisan castes in Coorg Proper are immigrants from Malabar.

While Coorg houses are extremely substantial structures, temples dedicated to village-deities are usually small and unimpressive buildings. But the well-known temples dedicated to Brahminical or Sanskritic deities are substantial, as formerly rich devotees liked building solid and massive temples for their patron-deities.

346 Lucky indeed were the deities who could count the Rājas of Coorg as their devotees. The Bhagaṇḍēshwara temple in Bhāgamaṇḍla, Omkārēshwara temple in Mercara, the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi temple in Kuklûr, and many others have benefited from the munificence of the Rājas.

The construction of a temple is accompanied by elaborate 346 793 ritual, and the Tanṭri Brahmins of South Canara are masters of this ritual. The folksongs frequently refer to a Tantri Brahmin being sent for to supervise the performance of the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple. The Tantri himself knows how to set images more firmly in their bases, revivify deities who have lost power, and so on.

It is usually a Brahmin from either South Canara or Malabar 793 796 who is priest at temples dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). Worship is offered to the deity at least once every day in temples where Brahmins are priests. There are, however, temples in which a member of one of the non-Brahmin castes is priest. For instance, a Kannaḍa-speaking Okkaliga is priest at the temple of Kuṭṭatammé in Kuṭṭa; and similarly, the deity Kētrappa has a Coorg priest. [776] Quite apart from this, in almost every village the very low castes (Mēda and Poleya) have their own deities who are not usually worshipped by the higher castes. The latter refer to such a deity as, for instance, 'Mēdara Ayyappa' (Mēdas' Ayyappa), 'Poleyara dēvaru' (Poleyas' deities), and so on.

The position may be summed up thus: (1) there are first of all temples dedicated to Sanskritic deities, with Brahmin priests, at which only vegetarian offerings are made, and these deities are worshipped by all the high castes.[1] Until recently, Untouchables were not being admitted to such temples. Now, legally, they are entitled to enter them. (2) There are temples where Brahmins are normally priests, the offerings normally vegetarian, and the mode of worship Sanskritic, but on certain occasions such as the festival of the deity the Brahmin withdraws and animals are decapitated before the deity by a non-Brahmin. The Brahmin priest re-enters the temple only after purifying it. (3) Temples where non-Brahmins are priests. Brahmins usually do not have anything to do in such a temple, but lay Brahmins may propitiate such a deity during an

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[1] This ignores, however, the distinction into Shaivism and Vaishṇavism, and the fact that the orthodox followers of the one do not generally go to the temples of the other.

epidemic or other disaster. Brahmins make only offerings of fruits 793
and flowers even when propitiating such a deity.[1] (4) Deities pro- 796
pitiated by one or other of the lowest castes who are rarely propitiated by the upper castes. Such a deity is identified with the caste habitually propitiating him (or her).

Every temple has a headman called *dēva takka*, belonging to one of the high castes, who generally looks after the temple and its property. The *okkas* belonging to the high castes annually pay him a contribution in paddy and cash towards the maintenance of the temple. He, together with the village headman, organizes the elaborate festival of the deity. He has also certain ritual duties at the festival, which vary from village to village. His relation with the village headman too varies from village to village.

Formerly every important temple in a village seems to have had 794
three permanent officials, Mukkāṭi, Neravanḍa, and Chengōla. Of these three the last two are defunct today, and only the first-mentioned Mukkāṭi still continues to exist. These offices were hereditary in certain *okkas* and these *okkas* generally belonged to a high caste like Coorg, Gauḍa, smith, and cowherd. The Chengōla looked after the accounts, and the Mukkāṭi swept the temple and lit the lamps, but we do not know what the duties of the Neravanḍa were. Mukkāṭi and Neravanḍa occur occasionally as surnames of certain Coorg *okkas*.

Every temple has pipers and drummers. These may belong to a [533]
high caste like Mārāyas, or a low caste like Mēdas or Poleyas.

In addition to the above, every temple of a village-deity has a 793
number of *kāvukāras* or festival-priests who are active only during 796
the periodical festival. All the high-caste[2] *okkas* in a village are usually festival-priests at the festival of their village-deity. This priesthood, like other offices, is attached to the *okka* and not to the individual members thereof. Both the men and the women of the priestly *okkas* have duties and roles at the festival. The men have such tasks as carrying the idol of the deity, bathing it, and holding

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[1] It is possible, however, that in exceptional circumstances a Brahmin might make an offering of a fowl through a non-Brahmin friend. He might also take a wife, sister, or daughter, possessed by a ghost, to a non-Sanskritic temple for cure.

[2] As far as I know the Brahmin is nowhere festival-priest. He is either priest at the temple or performs only purificatory rites during the festival. In the latter case, there is another temple dedicated to a Sanskritic deity, where he performs all the priestly duties every day.

793 swords before it while it is being carried in state, while the 796 women carry the sacred dish-lamp and the *pōḷiya* box.[1] Again, each festival-priest may be required to provide a certain votive offering like *kuduré* ('horse'), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), *ettu pōraṭa* (bullock loaded with rice), and so on. The oracles (*tiruvaḷa*) also run traditionally in certain *okkas*.

796 624 The entire work of the festival is distributed among the various high-caste *okkas* in the village. (The Mēdas and Poleyas, though they may have important roles, are nowhere festival-priests.) The work is divided meticulously: for instance, at the Kētrappa festival, a man belonging to one *okka* carries Kētrappa's image up to the temple compound and then hands it over to another belonging to a different *okka* who carries it for about 12 feet and places it on a bench. Division of festival labour is thorough and minute, and formerly a duty was looked upon as a privilege.

796 773 According to the song sung at the festival of Kētrappa, the *okkas* which are festival-priests today all formed part of the original caravan which went to Malabar and brought the deity to Bēngūr. Incidents which form part of the festival are 'explained' by reference to this caravan: for instance, the Kētrappa image is brought from its normal resting-place which is the Taṭṭanḍa house on the seventeenth day of the festival and deposited in the Aréyanḍa house for three days, after which it is taken back to the Taṭṭanḍa house. This is explained in the song by reference to the fact that the deity stayed in the Aréyanḍa house while a temple was built for him when he first came to Bēngūr. The important fact for us is that the song refers to this incident. The song provides a charter and an explanation of the incidents taking place in the festival.

IV

796 624 The festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi of Kuklūr, near Vīrarājpēṭ in south Coorg, now briefly described, may be regarded as typical of the festivals of village-deities. These festivals last for several days, involve very elaborate and complicated ritual, and imply the co-operation of several castes, and frequently of two or three villages.

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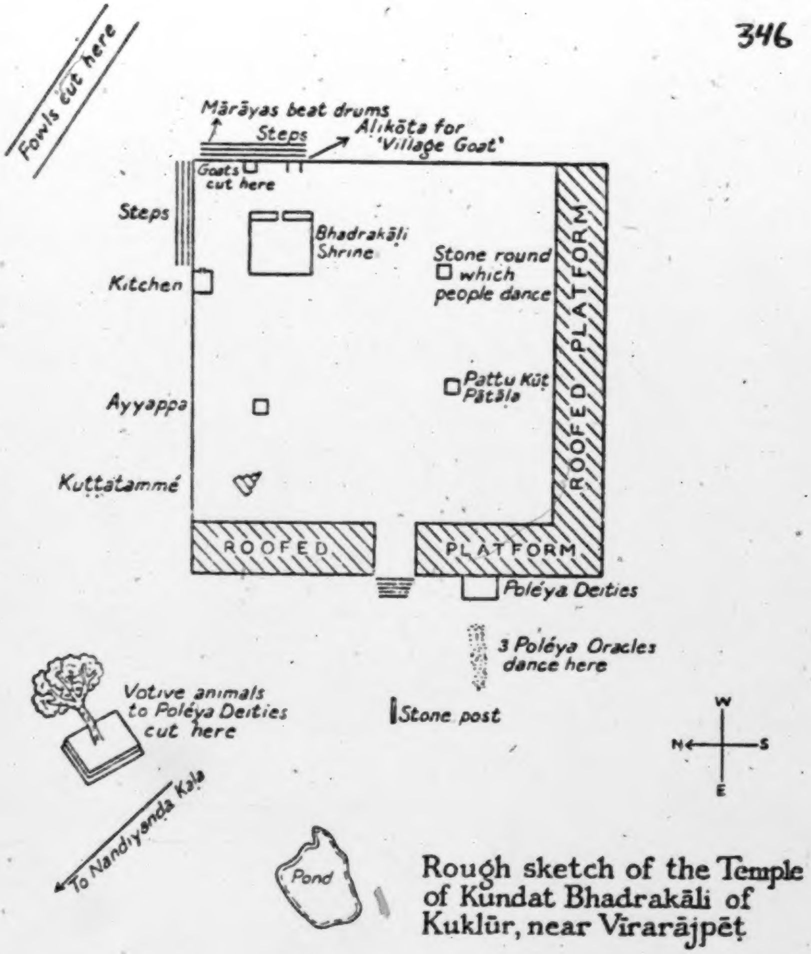
[1] The *pōḷiya* box is a box of plaited cane, containing an odd number of measures of rice, odd number of coconuts, plantains, jaggery cubes, and betel leaves and areca-nut. It is carried by a married woman on auspicious occasions such as marriage

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

[p.187]

346


Fowls cut here
Mārāyas beat drums
Steps
Alikōta for 'Village Goat'
Goats cut here
Steps
Bhadrakāli Shrine
Stone round which people dance
Kitchen
ROOFED PLATFORM
Pattu Kūṭ Pātāla
Ayyappa
Kuttatammé
ROOFED
PLATFORM
Poléya Deities
3 Poléya Oracles dance here
Votive animals to Poléya Deities cut here
Stone post
W
N
S
E
To Nandiyanda Kala
Pond

Rough sketch of the Temple of Kundat Bhadrakāli of Kuklūr, near Vīrarājpēṭ

4. Plan of the temple of Bhadrakāḷi of Kunda

796 621 Every village in Coorg, and occasionally two or three villages together, celebrate either annually or once every few years the festival of a village-deity. These festivals have the same structure all over Coorg Proper, and a description of any one of these festivals gives one an idea of the religious life of the people. But this should not lead one to conclude that there are not any important differences between the festivals of different village-deities.

[805] The ritual life of a Coorg is regulated with reference to the very accurate solar calendar which prevails in the Tuḷu-Malayāḷam- and Tamil-speaking areas.[1] The festival of a village-deity starts on a certain day in a particular solar month, and goes on for seven or nine or eleven or fifteen or twenty-one days according to local custom. Local custom again decides the length of the interval between two festivals: it may be a year or two years or more.

The festival of a village-deity usually begins with the *tappaḍaka* ceremony at which all[2] the assembled villagers take a vow to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions till the evening of the *nammé* or 'festival day' which occurs towards the end. At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the tenth day is the 'festival day' and the dietetic restrictions are broken on the tenth night. The eighth day of the festival is the *paṭṇi* or 'fast day', and on this day villagers have to subsist on pancakes and the sweet liquid dish, *pāyasa*.

There is a lull in the ritual after the administering of the vows till the 'fast day'. It does not, however, mean total absence of ritual: some routine ritual acts such as the beating of drums and dancing before the temple of the deity are performed. Also preparations are made for the later important days: the roads and the approaches to the temple are cleared of weeds.

The eighth and tenth days are important days, as mentioned earlier. On the twelfth day there is a dinner for all the men in the village (excluding the Brahmin priests), and the 'village goat' (*ūraḍu*) and the two village fowls (*ūru kōḷi*), sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi on the tenth night, are cooked and eaten at this dinner.

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[1] The people in Kannaḍa and Telugu countries regulate their ritual life mainly with reference to the lunar calendar. But the upper castes need to refer to the solar calendar also for some of their festivals and ritual.

[783] [2] Poleyas are usually excluded from participation in these ceremonies. They are either totally excluded from the festival or, where they are allowed to participate, they do so at a different level from the rest. The Mēdas are never excluded from the festival, but are allowed to participate at a different level from the high-caste people on the one hand and the Poleyas on the other. Custom, in this respect, varies from village to village.

On the first of *kādiyār* (Taurus), at about 8 a.m., the members 796 of Kuklūr village gather together before the temple of Kundat 621 Bhadrakāḷi. The Brahmin priest of the temple worships the deity, and then the Bhadrakāḷi oracle, Shri Tātanḍra Kāryappa, becomes possessed by the deity and, while possessed, he issues instructions as to how to conduct the festival. He allots the work of the festival among the various Coorg *okkas* in the village and decides the dates of the fast and festival days. These days as well as the work which each *okka* has to do have already been decided by custom, and one might say that the oracle only decides according to custom. Sometimes, however, he makes minor alterations to suit special circumstances.

An elder of the Moṇṇanḍra *okka* then administers the festival vows to the assembled villagers. The headmanship of the Bhadrakāḷi temple runs in the Moṇṇanḍra *okka*, and to him as *dēva takka* belongs the right of administering oaths. A member of the Kuṭṭanḍa *okka* then dances the 'peacock dance' before the temple, carrying a bundle of peacock feathers. The dancer dances to the beat of the Poleya's drum.

No ritual is performed on the second day. On the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days, the representatives of the Kuṭṭanḍa *okka* dances the peacock dance a hundred and one times round the stone post before the temple. Four Coorgs sing the Bhadrakāḷi song to the beat of a big drum (*dōḷu*).

On the eighth day a partial fast is observed till dusk when a horn is blown which puts an end to the fast. At night, after dinner, there is a fancy-dress (*bōḍu*) show in which Coorg men take part. They dress themselves as *sanyasis*, Māpiḷḷa traders from Malabar, Mēda drummers, and so on. The ways and customs of different castes and people from different parts are satirized in the fancy-dress show. In 1941 (when I witnessed the festival) the marriage of a [582] Coorg girl with a Tamil Mudaliar man was satirized. Coorgs do not approve of marriage with non-Coorgs and this disapproval expresses itself in a variety of ways.[1] Such marriages are still unusual.

After the fancy-dress show at the threshing-yard (*kaḷa*) of the

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[1] I remember an attempt to pass a formal resolution of censure against a high-placed Coorg gentlemen who had married a non-Coorg. This was during the harvest festival when the various branches of the *okka* are expected to assemble at the ancestral house. The attempt failed conspicuously as a very important branch of the *okka* living outside Coorg failed to turn up.

796 Nandiyanḍa *okka*, those taking part in the fancy-dress as well as
624 the spectators go to the temple along with the Poleya oracles. The latter dance outside the temple, before the platform where representations of their deities are kept. After this dance the fancy-dress men proceed to every high-caste house in Kuklūr, beginning with the house of the *nāḍ*-headman and ending with the house of the Brahmin priest of the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The order in which they should proceed to the various houses has been fixed by custom. At each house the fancy-dress men are treated to coffee, coconut, plantains, and cooked rice dough (*puṭṭ*).

The duties, contributions in cash or kind, and offerings which each Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr has to make are clearly laid down. These duties run in the *okkas* concerned, and they may not be altered except with their consent. When an *okka* dies out or migrates to a different part of Coorg and a new *okka* from outside buys its property, the latter steps into the rights and duties of the former.[1]

The performance of the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi requires the co-operation of several castes. In the case of all the co-operating castes except Coorgs the contribution to the work of the festival is on the basis of caste. In the case of Coorgs, however, it is on the basis of *okka*. Every Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr is a priestly *okka* at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi.

The Māḷeṭṭira, Moṇṇanḍra, and Nandiyanḍa *okkas* are each required to make offerings of an *ettu pōraṭa* (rice loaded on a pair of bullocks), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), and *kuduré* ('horse'). These offerings are made on different days towards the end of the festival. A young boy from each of the three *okkas* is dressed as a girl and he is called a 'prostitute'. On the eleventh afternoon the three 'prostitutes' run a race and this is followed by a race of the three 'horses'.

A hollow 'horse', minus legs and tail, is made with plaited split bamboo, and in the middle of its back the 'horse' has an opening large enough to allow a man's head and shoulders to pass through. One man sits on the shoulders of another and the head and shoulders of the top man are made to pass through the opening in the bamboo 'horse'. The lower man's head is hidden by the bamboo frame. The frame is decorated with garlands of flowers.

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[1] At the Kētrappa festival the immigrant Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* now perform all the duties which once belonged to the Ayyanḍa *okka*. The latter died out and the Paṭṭamāḍa bought their lands and settled down in Bēngūr.

On the ninth afternoon the villagers go in state to the Bhadrakāḷi 796 temple, accompanied by the three 'horses'.[1] The latter run round 621 the inner shrine thrice. After this is over, Coorg men dance the 'torch dance' (*boḷakāṭ*)—actually they hold in their hands swords (*kaḍatalés*) or *chauris* (yak-tail whisks). Four Coorg drummers stand in the centre of the circle formed by the dancers, beating their small drums. As they beat the drums they sing the Bhadrakāḷi song. The outer circle of dancers do not, however, sing this song, but a different one which consists mostly of the names of deities interspersed with short interjections such as '*ho!*', '*ha!*', and '*he!*': people dancing the torch dance always sing such a song.

After the dance is over, the Brahmin priests treat the Coorg devotees to coffee, and a dish made of parched rice mixed with jaggery and grated coconut. Coorgs sit on the steps all round the shrine and the Brahmins serve them, taking care, however, not to touch them. Only the priests may enter the kitchen or the inner shrine.[2]

The Poleyas who stand outside the temple compound then light reed torches in honour of one of *their* deities. They frequently shake the torches and this sends forth a shower of sparks. This is called *tūḍ nammé* (torch festival). They then let fly twenty-five chickens which perch on the roof of the temple compound. The upper-caste people who are inside the temple now climb up the roofs and catch the chickens, which belong to those who catch them.

The Poleya is normally the servant of the Coorg. He works for [437] his master in the latter's field and house, and in return for this he is paid in paddy and straw annually. Usually the Poleya, like the Brahmin, is the receiver of goods from the Coorg.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival the live chickens offered by 796 Poleyas ultimately reach their Coorg masters. It is like a gift by 564 Poleyas as a caste to Coorgs as a caste, and such a gift emphasizes inter-caste solidarity. Caste has a natural tendency to stress

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[1] Any other *okkas* which have vowed to make offerings of 'horses' also join the procession.

[2] The Brahmins usually receive material goods in exchange for the ritual [793] services they perform. Every *okka* in the village annually gives the local Brahmins [437] a certain amount of paddy and straw during harvest. This is in addition to payments for specific services. During the festival the Brahmin gives the members of the village some cooked food which has been earlier consecrated by being offered to the deity.

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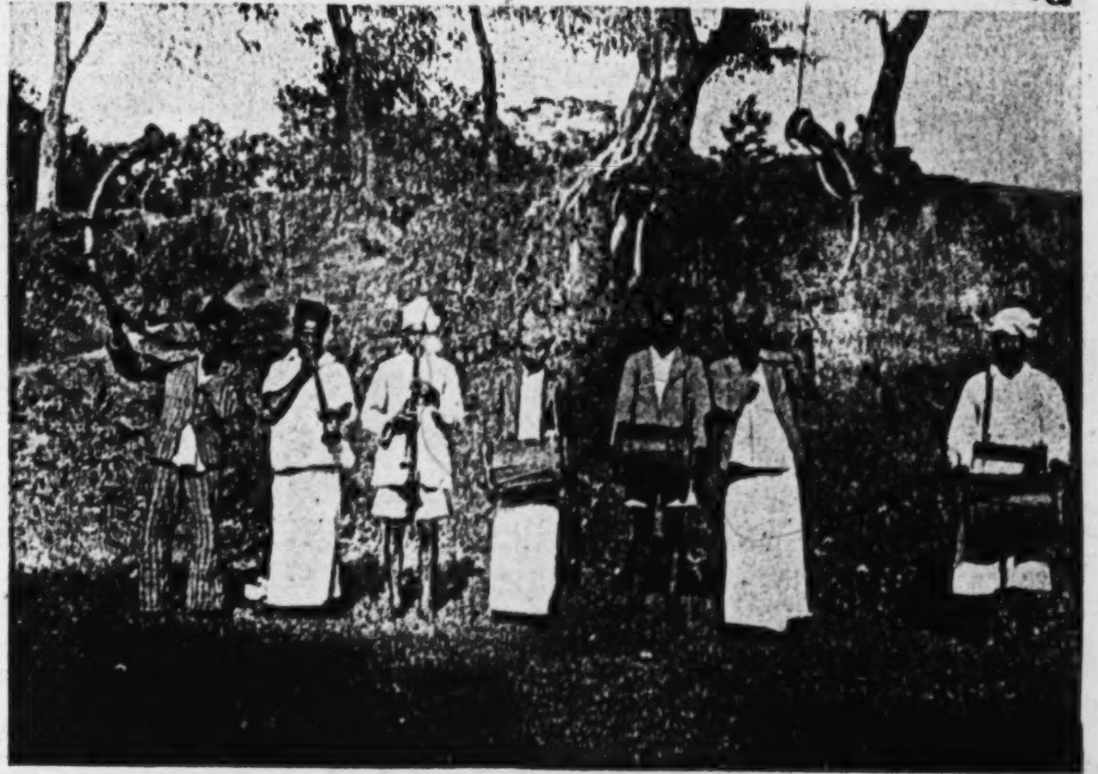
[Facing p. 192]



MĒDAS AND POLEYAS PROVIDE MUSIC FOR COORG DANCERS

796 horizontal ties and this has to be balanced by stressing vertical [504] ties periodically.

In the case of the Brahmin the dishes prepared for offering to the deity also become gifts to people who normally contribute to the upkeep of the temple and its priest. The Brahmin and Poleya, though they stand at either extreme of the social scale, are similar in this, that they are normally receivers of goods at the hands of Coorgs and others. During the festival they make token returns which, while negligible economically, are enough to stress the goodwill prevalent between the various sections of a village community.[1]

The tenth day, the festival day, is the most important day of the festival. Visitors come from surrounding villages to witness the ritual that is performed on this day at the temple. A ritual fast is observed till about 10 p.m., and adult villagers subsist till then on pancakes and *pāyasa*.

The morning is devoted to making preparations for the rites in the evening, and for cooking. Some time in the afternoon the villagers go in procession to the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The procession is led by Poleya oracles who walk with their faces to the Bhadrakāḷi oracle and the crowd. Pack-bullocks carrying votive offerings of rice (*ettu pōraṭa*) form part of the procession.

[791] The Poleya oracles stop outside the temple, before the wooden platform on which an image and representations of their deities are placed. The villagers go into the temple driving their pack-bullocks before them and walk round the Bhadrakāḷi shrine thrice. [534] They then dance the torch dance in the temple yard, holding yak-tail whisks or swords in their hands.

Drummers belonging to the Mārāya caste beat big drums called *chaṇḍés* while the Brahmin priests worship Bhadrakāḷi inside the shrine using Sanskrit *mantras*. Devotees, Coorgs as well as others, who pay the requisite fees, can have worship performed by the priest to the deity in their names.

796 Meanwhile, the Bhadrakāḷi oracle stands behind the shrine and 787 people put questions to him on matters concerning their welfare: one wants to know whether his wife will recover from an illness, another why he has suffered from a series of misfortunes in the last

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[1] They are alike in that both are excluded from the activities of the middle castes. Extreme purity excludes the Brahmin while extreme impurity excludes the Untouchable.

796 few years, a third man whether he should go ahead with a business
787 or other venture he has been contemplating for some time, and so on. (He answers questions again that night.)

Outside the temple compound Poleya oracles are possessed by their deities. They run about possessed, and their possession comes to an end when the possession of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle comes to an end. While possessed, the Poleya oracles may be called upon to exorcise evil spirits from people.

796 After the possession stops, devotees make offerings of money
[782] (*kāṇikĕ*) to the deity.[1] Miniature silver representations of a human being, of any part of the body, and of a cradle are made by those who had vowed to make such offerings on recovery from an illness, or recovery of the normal use of an organ, or the birth of a child, respectively.[2]

The afternoon concludes with the Brahmin priests' offering to the devotees parched rice sweetened with jaggery and coffee. The villagers then disperse.

V

At about 9 p.m. the people of Kuklūr and sightseers from other villages gather together at the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanḍa *okka*. Mēdas and Poleyas play on their drums and pipes, and Coorg men and boys dance to their music. Four villagers beat the big drum (*dōḷu*), singing the drum song which is about Bhadrakāḷi. Votive animals, to be offered to Bhadrakāḷi, are all assembled here before being driven to the temple. In 1941 there were twenty-three sheep, three goats, and fifty fowls. This was exclusive of one 'village goat' (*ūrāḍu*) and two 'village fowls' (*ūru kōḷi*) which are subscribed for by the entire village.[3]

[778] With a brass mask of Bhadrakāḷi as nucleus, a Paṇika builds a circular *téré*—a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of the *pāmbaḷé* plant. This *téré* is leaned against two pegs and then the Paṇika worships it. He kills a chicken and cooks it in

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[1] Collections are also made on the ninth and eleventh days. The expenses of the festival are met out of the money raised at the collections. Rs110 was collected on the tenth day.

[171] [2] This custom prevails all over south India.

[3] It is known that formerly between 300–400 animals were annually sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi. The number has fallen off very greatly now. A very small section of Coorg opinion would like to do away with animal sacrifice altogether.

796 the immense fire that is burning several yards from the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*. The chicken and a little toddy are offered to the *téré* representing Bhadrakāḷi.

[535] The Paṇika dancer gets ready for his performance which begins an hour later. He wears tiny bells (*gaggaras*) round his ankles, paints his face red and yellow, wears a turban, and ties an elaborate red skirt round his waist. He stands there waiting for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive and give him permission to place the circular *téré* on his head. The *téré* is kept flat on the head and held by one hand while the Paṇika dances and sings a song in praise of Bhadrakāḷi.

Three Poleyas, oracles of deities worshipped only by Poleyas,
796 also wait for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive. The latter rushes into
787 the Nandiyaṇḍa threshing-yard, stamps on the roaring fire with bare feet, and then touches the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*, signifying that the Paṇika may now place it on his head. He then rushes to the temple, where he starts dancing a very vigorous dance before the shrine of Bhadrakāḷi.

A change is noticeable in the Poleya oracles as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle rushes in. The deities of the Poleyas are regarded as subservient to, and dependent upon, Bhadrakāḷi, who is the deity of the higher castes. And the oracles, who are Poleyas of the deities of the Poleyas, are also regarded as inferior to, dependent upon, the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi, who is a Coorg. Thus the structural distance between Coorgs and Poleyas expresses itself in every sphere.

Two Poleya oracles run to and fro, with swords in their hands, while the third, the oracle of the deity Pūda, writhes on the ground and groans, while the Bhadrakāḷi oracle is stamping on the fire with bare feet. He stops groaning and writhing as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle leaves the threshing-yard.

The villagers place the *téré* on the Paṇika's head. The latter starts singing a song in Maylayāḷam in honour of Bhadrakāḷi. The entire body of villagers, headed by the Poleya oracles marching with their faces to the crowd, then run to the temple. The Poleyas stop outside the temple while the others go in. The votive sheep also may not go in, and they remain outside the temple. They are later sacrificed outside the temple.

The villagers go into the temple and walk round the shrine thrice. The village goat heads the procession inside the temple.

Once the third round is completed, the Paṇika dances before the 796
shrine. The villagers let off fireworks, the Mārāyas beat drums, 787
and there is general tumult and shouting.

The Bhadrakāḷi oracle executes a vigorous dance for about forty-five
minutes before the shrine. After the dance is over he selects
two swords out of a number offered by the Brahmin priest and then
proceeds to the roofed platform at the entrance to the temple,
where he declares how many of the votive animals may be sacrificed
to the Poleya deities. Then he proceeds to place one sword on [785]
his head and hit it with the other. Soon his head is covered entirely
with blood. The Poleya oracles gash themselves following the Bhadrakāḷi oracle. The latter then proceeds to the veranda of the shrine, where he gashes himself more. This gashing is called *narāhuti* (human sacrifice). After the oracle has stopped gashing himself he answers questions. He orders the Paṇika to cease dancing and remove the *téré*. The Brahmin priest then offers him consecrated water which he drinks. The priest begs the oracle, identified with Bhadrakāḷi, to pardon the lapses which might have occurred through ignorance and to leave the village without inflicting any harm. The oracle orders those present to conduct the festival properly, and then the possession ceases.

The oracle is completely identified with the deity supposed to be possessing him. Even the Brahmin priest believed that the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi was really the deity herself. It was temporarily forgotten that he was a Coorg by caste. There was a look of fear on the priest's face when he was requesting the deity (the oracle) to leave the village without harming anyone. But though the oracle is identified with Bhadrakāḷi, he does not enter the innermost room where Bhadrakāḷi's image is kept. That is to say, the implications of the identification of the oracle with Bhadrakāḷi are not fully worked out. Only the priest may go into the innermost room, and this rule is not relaxed in favour of the oracle who is temporarily identified with Bhadrakāḷi.

After the Bhadrakāḷi oracle returns to his normal condition, the 796
priest shuts the door of the shrine and goes home. Women, 782
children, and a good many spectators also leave. Only the festival-priests and other functionaries remain, along with those who have brought the votive animals, to witness the decapitation that follows. The Paṇika, whose duty it is to sacrifice the animals brought by devotees, makes a small incision in the little finger of his left hand

796 782 before decapitating the animals. As soon as a few drops of blood drip from his finger, he sacrifices the 'village fowls'. Then he decapitates the 'village goat' before the shrine. The decapitation of the other animals takes place only after the decapitation of the 'village fowls' and 'village goat'. The Paṇika receives as his perquisite the heads of the 'village goat' and of all the fowls.

After all the animals have been cut, the assembled villagers turn their backs on the scene of carnage and remain silent for a few minutes. This is to enable the deity to consume the essence of the sacrificed animals in peace. They then turn round and sing the *ānanda pāṭ* (the song of joy), after which the villagers depart for their homes with the headless carcasses. The headless 'village goat' is tied to a high branch of the *dēva kaṇigalé* (oleander) tree near the temple. It remains suspended there till noon of the twelfth day, when it is taken down and cooked for the communal dinner. It is said that vultures and kites do not touch the carcass of the 'village goat', nor does the flesh go bad as it normally would in the heat of summer. This is attributed to the power of Bhadrakāḷi.

VI

796 [783] On the eleventh morning a representative of the Karṇanḍra *okka* cleans the temple yard of bloodstains and he is paid three *paṇas* (about nine annas) for performing this duty. The Brahmin priest then ritually purifies the temple and temple yard by sprinkling consecrated water everywhere and uttering the appropriate Sanskrit *mantras*.

Races are held on the eleventh afternoon for 'prostitutes' (*chūḷé*) and for 'horses' (*kuduré*). The Māḷeṭṭira, Moṇṇanḍra, and Nandiyanḍa *okkas* are each required to send one 'prostitute' and one 'horse' for the races. 'Prostitutes' and 'horses' are regarded as [782] votive offerings. For instance, when a boy is ill, his parents might make a vow to the effect that they will dress him up as a 'prostitute' at the coming festival.

Getting the 'prostitute' and 'horse' ready in time is not very easy, and clear, if elaborate, rules are laid down requiring certain *okkas* to help each of the three *okkas* charged with the responsibility of making the offerings. For instance, the Tātanḍra *okka* is required to help the Māḷeṭṭira *okka*, the Kuṭṭanḍra *okka* (now split into two) to help the Moṇṇanḍra *okka*, and the Māḷeṭṭira *okka* to help the Nandiyaṇḍa *okka* to get the 'prostitute' ready. Elaborate rules 796 are again laid down as to which *okkas* should help each of the three *okkas* concerned to get the 'horse' ready. The punctilious regard for detail is characteristic of the festivals of village-deities.

The Moṇṇanḍra 'prostitute' and 'horse' are conducted by the Poleya oracles to the Moṇṇanḍra rice-fields, and after leaving them there, the Poleya oracles accompany the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to the Māḷeṭṭira house. Together they escort the Māḷeṭṭira 'prostitute' and 'horse' to the Moṇṇandra rice-fields. Finally, the entire body proceed to the threshing-yard of the Nandiyaṇḍa *okka*, where they meet the latter's 'prostitute' and 'horse'. At first, the three 'horses' run a race and then the 'prostitutes' follow suit.

The villagers, oracles, 'horses', and 'prostitutes' then proceed to the temple, where they walk round the shrine thrice. The 'prostitutes' and 'horses' perform a dance and this is followed by the villagers dancing the 'torch dance'.

Tengé pōré or 'coconut scramble' takes place afterwards. The [526] *nāḍ*- or temple-headman holds a coconut aloft in his right hand, and this is a signal for youths to gather round him. He then lowers his right hand and stretches it horizontally before him. This is a sign for the youths to try and snatch it from him. After snatching the coconut, the man in possession of it has to run a few yards to a stone where he should break it, but before he does this, anyone may pounce on him and snatch the coconut from him. He who breaks it on the stone is the winner. He is given a prize.

The Brahmin priest then worships the goddess, using Sanskrit *mantras*, and this brings the proceedings to an end on the eleventh day.

On the twelfth morning there is an elaborate purification rite which the priest performs before the assembled villagers. The accounts of the money-offerings made on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh days are checked. Out of this sum fees are paid to the priest, oracles, cooks, Mārāya drummers, Paṇika, and Mēda, and Poleya musicians. The Bhadrakāḷi oracle then decides how much money should be spent on the evening's dinner.

The 'village goat' is brought down from the tree, cut up, and cooked into curry along with the 'village fowls'. There is a huge dinner at which all the villagers take part. Toddy is also served at this dinner, as at other village dinners.

VII

791 The Bhadrakāḷi oracle plays a most important and, to the out-
796 sider, rather puzzling role in the festival. He directs the festival at every stage and these directions are given while he is believed to be possessed by the deity whose oracle he is.

It should be remembered here that the tasks which each *okka* has to perform in the festival and the contributions it is required to make are all determined by custom. The oracle rarely sets aside or countermands these tasks and contributions, and he does so only when there are good reasons: for instance, if the sole adult male representative of one of the concerned *okkas* is seriously ill during the festival the oracle will ask another *okka* to take over the duties of the sick man.

Sometimes the oracle is given the discretionary power to act with some latitude. For instance, he is required to allot some of the votive animals brought by the upper-caste devotees to the deities of the Poleyas. In 1941, when I witnessed the festival, he did not allot any goat to the Poleya deities as only three goats had been brought as offerings. The Poleya deities had to rest content with a few sheep and fowls.

The oracle also decides which day of the festival should be the fast-day or *paṭṇi*. He usually chooses the eighth day, but if it is unsuitable for some reason or other, he chooses an earlier or later day.

[787] The point to note is that all these instructions are issued while the oracle is believed to be possessed by the deity. The oracle's words are regarded as the deity's words. Coorgs commonly talk about 'the deity said this', and 'the deity did that', and it is only after a while that the outsider understands that they are referring to the oracle's acts and words. The oracle no doubt issues instructions while possessed, but these instructions only restate, confirm, and support what has already been decided by custom. The oracle exercises his discretionary power only in certain known and definite contexts..

The villagers know every step of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle beforehand. They tell you that 'he will be running in a minute', or that 'he will be gashing his head', and so on. It is like a play which they have seen before and you have not.

Shri Tātanḍra Kāryappa is the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi and unlike

other Coorgs he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. People respect him 791
greatly for his piety. He is frequently contrasted with other oracles, 796
who, in their day-to-day lives, are neither conspicuously pious nor virtuous.

Poleyas may not enter the temple of Bhadrakāḷi. Images and representations of their deities are placed on an improvised platform outside the temple compound. The Poleya oracles dance before this platform.

Some of the duties performed by the Poleyas, however, require them to exercise power over people belonging to the higher castes, and this has the effect of compensating them for the low position they normally occupy in the caste structure. The Poleya oracles who dance before their deities have the power to spot any stranger trying to enter the temple. They also exorcise evil spirits from [789]
possessed persons who may frequently belong to a high caste.

Votive animals are brought on the tenth day to Bhadrakāḷi mostly by the members of the high castes. A few of these are allotted to the Poleya deities by the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi. While half of each decapitated animal before Bhadrakāḷi is shared by *okkas* belonging to the high castes in Kuklūr, the animals decapitated before Poleya deities are not so shared. The Poleyas share among themselves the animals decapitated before their deities. The allotment of [437]
some of the animals brought by members of the high castes to the Poleya deities constitutes a gift by the high castes to Poleyas. This might be regarded as a return gift for the twenty-five chickens which were 'given' on the ninth day by the Poleyas to the high-caste people.

The position of the Poleyas varies from festival to festival. In some festivals the exclusion aspect seems to be stressed to the neglect of other aspects, whereas in certain others, along with the exclusion-aspect, the solidarity-aspect and the compensation-aspect are all stressed, but with the first mentioned predominating over the others.

VIII

The village is a social unit of considerable strength, and this is 121
in spite of the fact that caste-ties are always tending to stretch beyond the village (and even *nāḍ*). A village is a multi-caste association and the unity of the village always demands that caste-ties

621 are checked sufficiently to prevent their overflowing the village, and that unity with other castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy is stressed. This was easier in the past because the hierarchy was tacitly accepted by the people, and low castes like Mēdas and Poleyas did not object to participating with the other castes in the village at a lower level, or even being completely
[628] excluded on certain ritual occasions. Again the widespread prevalence of feuds between villages and between *nāḍs* tended to emphasize the unity of the village and check the segmentary action of caste.

796 At the *tappaḍaka* ritual, the members of the village or *nāḍ*
621 celebrating the festival of the local village-deity undertake to
784 observe certain dietetic and other restrictions while the festival lasts. The villagers may not kill an animal or break an egg or coconut for the table; and toddy may not be tapped within the village. Villagers who want to consume these articles have to import them from outside. The festival-priests, who are more important than ordinary villagers, may not consume even imported meat and toddy. They have to observe strict vegetarianism and teetotalism. They are also required to observe strict continence and avoid touching laymen.

796 In the Kētrappa festival, women in their periods are required to
784 leave the village and return to it only after the festival is over. Such a woman is in a condition of pollution; and her presence in the village is regarded as inconsistent with the ritual status of the village. People in a condition of birth- or death-pollution are also not allowed to participate in the festival.

No marriage may be performed during the festival. If a person dies in the village he has to be buried quietly, without the customary firing of guns and band.

These restrictions serve to show that the village (or *nāḍ*) is the concerned entity in the festival. The restrictions increase as concern increases—the festival-priests have to observe more restrictions than the laymen. The village (or *nāḍ*) observing the festival is marked off from other villages by these restrictions. Every villager knows that failure by any one of them to observe the restrictions might result in some misfortune to the entire village. The unity of the village is projected to the 'mystical' plane and is supported by ritual sanctions.

A brief account of a part of the ritual of enumeration of restric-

tions at the harvest festival is necessary here. The headman of the 796
most important temple in the village begans by asking whether 784
everyone (every adult male, that is to say) is present.

The village-headman replies,[1] 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Village-headman: 'Has the *okka* which has committed the wrong, the one who stays outside (Poleyas), the one who heats and beats (Airis or smiths), the one who lifts and beats (Maḍivāḷas or washermen), without a single absentee, is everyone assembled here?'

Temple-headman: 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Temple-headman: 'He who knew how to sing, but refused to sing or dance at the festival, or when the villagers went singing and dancing to his house, he did not open the closed door, or he did not remove the bell-metal dining-dish leaned against the wall, or he did not light the sacred wall-lamp, or he did not mix with another, or he abused another villager during the festival, or he beat another villager all over the body, such a man shall pay a fine of forty-eight *paṇas* for violating the injunctions of god.' Saying this the temple-headman extends his palm towards the village-headman who strikes it as witness to the statement.

The above rite makes it clear that the members of every caste in the village, including the Poleyas, attended the meeting of the village-assembly, and that everyone in the village had to observe certain rules and restrictions during the festival. The villagers had to keep their houses clean, with the doors open to receive a party of singers and dancers, with the sacred wall-lamp lit, they had to join in the singing and dancing, and finally they had to refrain from quarrelling, whatever the provocation. Failure to observe these rules was punished with a heavy fine.

At the festival of a village-deity *tappaḍaka* ritual is performed in 796
the beginning and the restrictions enumerated to the members of 688
the village (or *nāḍ*), whereas in the harvest festival *tappaḍaka* is an occasion for meting out punishment to those guilty of

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[1] I have given above a translation of the formulas as they occur in *Paṭṭōlé Paḷumé*, pp. 239–40.

In Kaḍiyetnāḍ the temple-headman, or a temple official, opens the proceedings, whereas near Mercara the village-headman does it. The person who has to reply again varies from region to region: it may be the village- or temple-headman, or some elder.

The date of the ritual of the enumeration of restrictions also varies from region to region.

796 misdemeanour during the festival. Again, the latter may be regarded
688 as more secular than the former: at the festivals of the village-deities the members of the village take a vow in the name of god to keep the rules and restrictions, whereas at the harvest festival no such vow is taken.

796 At the end of the harvest festival there is a village dance (*ūr*
[535] *kōlu*) in which all the adult males in the village have to take part; and on the following day, or two days later, there is a dance for the entire *nāḍ* to which every village belonging to the particular *nāḍ* sends its representatives. Each village makes a special point of sending its best dancers to the *nāḍ* dance.

[224] The village dance is followed by a collective hunt by the villagers. (A collective hunt may also be organized by a *nāḍ*.) Every adult male in the village is required to be present at the hunt, and a successful hunt implies a co-ordination of the activities of numerous individuals. Lack of proper co-ordination has to be paid for with life or limb.

[527] The festivals of village-deities, the harvest festival, and the festival of arms all terminate with a dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*). The boar that is killed in the collective hunt is cooked on this occasion. If the game is not enough to go round, then one or two domesticated pigs or goats are slaughtered in addition. Each house brings its own cooked rice-flour to the dinner. The headman selects five men to serve food to the men.

The men bring halves of coconut shells or leaf-cups for liquor: a young man is given only one cup of liquor while an elder is entitled to more. The singers get an extra share of meat and liquor. The Poleyas do not sit with the rest, but are given a quantity of meat and liquor which they consume by themselves.

[521] Both the village dance and the village hunt stress the unity of the village. In the case of the village hunt, there is the additional element of the threat of danger from the boar or tiger or other wild animal. The village dinner is rightly called *ūrormé* or 'village harmony', as it maintains and increases the harmony of the village.

IX

634 Like the village and *okka*, the *nāḍ* is a real social unit and not a
628 mere administrative division imposed from above by the Rājas. In fact, before the political integration of Coorg by the Rājas, the maximum political unit seems to have been a union of two or three

nāḍs under a chief called Nāyaka, who was usually at feud with 634
other similar chiefs. For some time even after the country had 628
been effectively brought under the control of the Lingāyaṭs Rājas, feuds between *nāḍs* continued to occur.

The play of Kungu which is enacted in the south-western parts 634
of Coorg during the harvest festival gives us a picture of Coorg in 628
the days when inter-*nāḍ* feuds were common. *Maradalé* (feud) 536
was prevalent between Beppunāḍ and Kadiyetnāḍ, and it was so bitter that there was no intermarriage between them. They conducted raids on each other constantly. In one of these raids an arrow from a Beppunāḍ man lodged itself in the body of a Kaḍiyetnāḍ man. The injured fighter was carried by his friends to Chendappanḍa Kungu, a famous doctor in Eḍenālknāḍ. Kungu agreed to treat the injured man because Eḍenālknāḍ and Kaḍiyetnāḍ were friendly to each other. But Kungu's mother was born in Beppunāḍ and she persuaded her son to neglect the injured man, who belonged to a *nāḍ* which was the traditional enemy of her natal *nāḍ*. The injured man died as a result of Kungu's neglect.

It was common for deities to be identified with their *nāḍs*. 634
Temples were always chosen for attack. The story of Chengeṭṭira 628
Appaṇṇa stealing the wooden pins belonging to the see-saw of the 539
Bēngūr Povvedi temple has already been narrated. The most successful way of rousing the wrath of a *nāḍ* or village was by attacking one of its temples.

A patriot was also a devotee. The story of Kaiyandira Appayya brings out this point clearly. Appayya, a mere boy, whose ear-boring *mangala* had not yet been performed, was cut to the quick when he learnt that the well-known fighter, Kullachenḍa Chōndu, had tried to prevent the offer of worship at the temple of Chōli Povvedi in Arapaṭ village in Kaḍiyetnāḍ. Appayya persuaded the elders of Kaḍiyetnāḍ to permit him to fight Chōndu, whom he killed by resorting to unfair means. Appayya's action, instead of meeting with disapproval, earned him great rewards. *Mangala* ceremony was performed for him, and a number of privileges were conferred on him by a grateful *nāḍ*. These privileges later became hereditary in the Kaiyandira *okka*.

When a hero was born in a hostile *nāḍ*, all the people in the *nāḍ* 634
suffered from headache. The tower of its most important temple 787
was damaged, guns hanging from the roof fired of their own accord, babies sleeping in cradles suddenly woke up, frightened, and so on.

634 When the fortunes of a *nāḍ* were at a low ebb, the elders of that [788] *nāḍ* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nāḍ* and prayed to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

[773] Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appaṇṇa is supposed to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a powerful spirit, a *bīra*.

The boundary of a *nāḍ* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nāḍ* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nāḍ*.

634 Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the *nāḍ*-boundary:
164.

> 782 In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nāḍ* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nāḍ*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāḍs* repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ* and, at last, expelled from the country.[1]

X

[596] There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head. 621 Every *okka* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of [631] the women in the *okka*. A temple has a headman with a number of 629 officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nāḍ*, and every *nāḍ* has at least one *nāḍ*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are, [634] however, the headmen of *sīmé* or *désha*, of whom there are eight in all.

Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

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[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

their minds with leadership and precedence. In their folksongs, not 829
only a group of men, but also a herd of cattle and a bunch of 622
flowers have their leaders. And there the usual epithet by which a headman is referred to is *mūpayanda*, which means 'having precedence'. The sense of precedence is ubiquitous: formerly, when caravans from every *nāḍ* went to Malabar every summer, the senior headman's pack-bullocks marched ahead of the pack-bullocks of the others.

Ideas about precedence are expressed on ritual occasions. For [526]
instance, most festivals of Coorgs include the sport of shooting 829
at a target (*kuri*): a coconut and, on either side of it, a plantain 622
spathe are tied to the high branch of a tree, and the competitors 535
have to shoot at the coconut from a distance. The headman of the 796
village has the right to shoot first at the target. Again, at the village dance held during the harvest festival, the village-headman, or an expert dancer selected by him, leads the dance. The temple-headman comes next after the village-headman.

At the *nāḍ* dance, which is held a day or two after the village dance, precedence is very important. The dancers of each village forming part of the *nāḍ* gather together at their headman's house, whence they proceed to the *nāḍ* green with band. When the senior *nāḍ*-headman arrives with his men everyone present has to stand up. A mat is spread for him, and others may sit down only after him. If *nāḍ*-headmen from other *nāḍs* come to the dance, they sit to the left of the host *nāḍ*-headman, observing a strict order of seniority between them. Every dancer is provided with a pair of sticks. The host *nāḍ*-headman leads the dance, with the guest *nāḍ*-headmen occupying positions immediately next to him. The temple-headman comes after the guest *nāḍ*-headmen, and the various village-headmen who are gathered there take up positions after the temple-headman.

The guests are received with band when they arrive, and after [574]
the dancing and sports are over, they are given refreshments which nowadays consist of coffee, soft drinks, fruits, and betel leaves and areca-nut. Each guest *nāḍ*-headman pays a *paṇa* to the hosts before leaving. The hosts accompany each guest a little distance, the host's band proceeding ahead of the party. When all the guests have left, the villagers conduct their own *nāḍ*-headman in state to his house. They dine in his house, after which they disperse.

796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
[574] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given
gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the
adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's
house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the
dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
[574] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *duḍi*
(small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman
is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the villagers frequently move
about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the
head of these processions walks the *nāḍ*-headman's wife carrying
[778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on
every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nāḍ*-headman's
wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the
headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and
educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the
latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and
authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation,
and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between
him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The
latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure
headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[656] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that fre-
quently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality
periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable
to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a 178
festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact 622
which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by 627
the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of Kāṭakēri, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted on perjurors.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life have been responsible for undermining the authority of the headmen.

XI

Formerly, two or three neighbouring *nāḍs* came together 634
occasionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong [533]
contains an appeal (*éyi koḍ*) to an assembly of the elders of two *nāḍs* from an assembly of the elders of a single *nāḍ*. Another folksong refers to the elders of three *nāḍs* meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest 796
festival requires the co-operation of several *nāḍs*. The ritual cutting 634
of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival, and this has to be performed during a particular period on a particular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are [787]
decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the Pāḍi Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assembled headmen of Pāḍinālknāḍ of his decision. This is later conveyed to every *nāḍ*, village, and *okka*.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kaḍiyetnāḍ people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the decision of the astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi. The acceptance produced uniformity in very many *nāḍs*. Such ritual uniformity provides common values and makes possible the integration of several *nāḍs* into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and 779
other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the 184
barriers between *nāḍ* and *nāḍ*, and between caste and caste. 171

142
291

AN ELDER

142
292

A WIDOW

[Facing p. 208]

779 Sanskritic Hinduism also integrates Hindus in Coorg with Hindus
184 in other parts of India. Coorgs and other Hindus in every part of
171 Coorg worship Sanskritic deities like the Kāvēri. Hindus outside Coorg also go on pilgrimage to the source of the Kāvēri on the first of Libra. This makes clear to Coorgs that they are part of a wider community which worships the Kāvēri. Similarly the pilgrimages of Coorgs to certain famous centres of pilgrimage outside Coorg brings them into contact with Hindus speaking different languages and observing different customs, but who all worship certain common deities.

Sanskritic Hinduism gives, then, certain common values to all Hindus, and the possession of common values knits people together into a community. The spread of Sanskritic rites, and the increasing Sanskritization of non-Sanskritic rites, tend to weld the hundreds of sub-castes, sects, and tribes all over India into a single community. The lower castes have a tendency to take over the customs and rites of the higher castes, and this ensures the spread of Sanskritic cultural and ritual forms at the expense of others.

776 The majority of village-deities in Coorg have Sanskritic names:
171 Bhagavati (Povvedi), Chāmuṇḍi, Chauṇḍi, Kāḷi, Shasta or Ayy-
779 appa, and Kshētrapāla (corrupted into Kētrappa) are all Sanskritic. It is possible that these deities were originally non-Sanskritic and known by different names.

There is a passage in the ancient folksong, *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*, which may be translated as 'there is a Mādēva for every *nāḍ*, a Povvedi for every village, an Ayyappa for every *kēri* (section of a village), a Nāta (cobra-deity) for every *ōṇi* (lane leading to a Coorg house), and a Pūda for every *okka*'. The arrangement mentioned is too neat to be true, but it is not without a germ of truth. Usually, a cobra-deity is found in an *okka* while Povvedi and Mādēva are deities worshipped by a caste, or village, or *nāḍ*. The important point, however, is that every intelligent and educated Coorg interprets the above passage as meaning that the various village-deities are forms of Shiva or his wife Pārvati. This rule enables the chaos of the actual pantheon to be reduced to some kind of order. A similar rule prevails everywhere in India, and this has enabled Sanskritic Hinduism to absorb non-Sanskritic deities.

779 It is wrong, however, to imagine that it is always Sanskritic
634 Hinduism which bridges the gap between *nāḍs*. The harvest festival, for instance, is in the main non-Sanskritic even though it

779 touches Sanskritic ritual idiom at several points. There is also the
634 classic instance of Kaliyāṭaṇḍa Ponnappa (alias Ajjappa), the fighter, magician, and doctor, whose apotheosized spirit is nowadays worshipped by Coorgs in every part of Coorg.

769 The story of Kaliyāṭaṇḍa Ponnappa is not entirely fictitious, but
173 has a basis of fact. He was a descendant of the Kaliyāṭ *okka* in Kunjala village in Nālknāḍ, and very early in his life he seems to have gone to Malabar to study medicine and magic. After his return to Kunjala he became famous for his magical powers: he was said to have under his control the 'ten spirits of the underworld' (*pattu kūṭ pātāḷa*) which did what he wanted them to do. He was also a fighter, and he actually died while fighting the soldiers of Karaṇembāhu, the chief of Bhāgamanḍlanāḍ at that time. His friend and companion Boḷtu committed suicide after Ponnappa's death.

The spirit of Ponnappa caused headache in everyone. A famous magician was sent for and he had the spirits of Ponnappa and Boḷtu and the 'ten spirits of the underworld' imprisoned in a conch-shell. The conch-shell was buried under a stone in Malabar. But some time later an accident released the spirits from the conch-shell, and subsequently the spirits of Ponnappa and Boḷtu, and their common friend Kuṭṭapāla Māyila, all found shelter in the well-known temple of Sārtāvu (Ayyappa) of Makki.

[791] Ponnappa and his companions have found shelter in several temples in south-west Coorg. There are Ponnappa's oracles everywhere in Coorg Proper, but none may practise as an oracle unless he has been authorized by the chief oracle of Ponnappa in Makki.

People in every part of Coorg vow to make offerings to Ponnappa
[782] when they are suffering from bodily aches. It is believed that Sārtāvu (Ayyappa) has conferred on Ponnappa the power to cure aches. There is an annual festival in honour of Ponnappa at the Sārtāvu temple in Makki.

769 Educated Coorgs point out that Ponnappa is not a deity, but
776 only the very powerful spirit of a great magician and doctor who, in addition, died while fighting. The spirit of Ponnappa was, to begin with, guilty of anti-social conduct, giving headaches to everyone. That was the reason for its imprisonment in a conch-shell. After its release, it sought and obtained the protection of Sārtāvu of Makki. It then no more caused headaches, but cured them instead. It was subordinated to a well-known deity before being worshipped.

769 776 It is important to remember that Sārtāvu is Ayyappa, the son of Shiva and Vishṇu in the form of Mōhini. The lawless spirit of a magician-cum-fighter is tamed by making it subordinate to a deity who has been completely Sanskritized.

XII

182 584 782 The hierarchical idea inherent in caste expresses itself in a variety of ways at the festival of a village-deity. For instance, at the Kētrappa festival in Bēngūr, the fowls brought as offerings to the deity by members of the higher castes are decapitated by a Coorg, and the pigs brought by them, by a Paṇika. But neither the Coorg nor the Paṇika decapitates the animals brought by the lower castes like the Mēda and Poleya. The animals brought by the latter are decapitated by a Mēda.

Usually, the man who sacrifices the animal gets its head as his perquisite. The animal is then divided into two halves, one half going to the owner and the other to the village. Each *okka* in the village gets a share in the half which goes to the village. But the animals offered by Mēdas and Poleyas are not divided in this manner, nor do they get a share in the animals brought by the higher castes. That is to say, in this context, the village does not include the Mēda and Poleya. Nor does it include the Brahmin who does not sacrifice animals to deities.

182 584 773 The deities Kākkōṭ Achchayya, and Akkavva, according to the folksong, leave Malabar to seek shelter in Coorg. After crossing into Coorg they meet a Poleya deity, Kāryappa, whom they take as their servant. The three deities then go to Kākkōṭ village where they see some children playing. Kākkōṭ Achchayya and Akkavva possess Coorg children, whereas Kāryappa possesses a Poleya boy. In this instance, the caste-idiom is completely projected into mythology and religion.

776 182 The deities Kētrappa (m.) and Koḍli Povvedi (f.) are both recipients of offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor. Coorgs explain this by saying that both the deities lost their caste on coming into Coorg. In fact there is an incident in the Kētrappa song giving an account of the change in the dietetic habits of the deity: while returning to Bēngūr from Malabar, Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa, who was possessed by Kētrappa, put everyone to sleep while he climbed a *bainé* (caryota urens) tree and drank toddy from

the pot at the top. His followers woke up before he had climbed 776
down and demanded an explanation from him. Kētrappa (i.e. 182
Ayyaṇṇa) replied that until then he was only receiving sandalwood
paste and flowers,[1] but from then on he would receive instead 'blue-bubble toddy and crowing cocks'.

Deities have a tendency to adopt the customs of their devotees. 776
It is natural then for the deity from Malabar to switch over to 177
the Coorg's diet on reaching Bēngūr. But this diet is not the diet of the Brahmins. Coorgs explain the dietetic preference of their deities by saying that they 'lost their caste': a certain ambivalence can be detected in this attitude, an attitude which presumably prevails towards their own diet. They like non-vegetarian food and liquor, but at the same time consider vegetarianism as more ethical.

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[1] Brahmin priests in Coorg, Malabar, and South Canara use sandalwood paste and flowers, among other things, for the worship of deities.

VII

HINDUISM

I

779 ATTEMPTS to define an enormously complex and amorphous
182 phenomenon like Hinduism have usually ended in failure.
584 No definition will be attempted here, but instead some
important characteristics will be mentioned.

Hinduism has a long history, in the course of which it has spread over the whole of India. Buddhism, in origin a Hindu schism, is now the religion of a great part of Asia.

The structural basis of Hinduism is the caste system which occasionally even survives conversion to Christianity or Islam. The hierarchical system, with the Brahmin and Untouchable at either end, represents a fusion of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic systems of ritual and beliefs. Each caste has both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic ritual and beliefs, but the proportions in which the two are found together vary from caste to caste, and also from region to region. It is now possible to understand how Hinduism is able to include within itself the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains, and cults of ancestors and village-deities, as well as the profound philosophy of the Upanishads and Vēdānta, and the mysticism of the Bhakti Schools. Reformist sects like the Jains and Lingāyaṭs ended by becoming castes which resulted in walls being built round them, while, at the same time, they remained within the fold of Hinduism. The caste system has enabled a vast number of tiny groups with distinct cultures, occupations, and systems of belief to live side by side, the autonomy of each being respected while at the same time co-operation was ensured between them. But in the history of India the idea of hierarchy has occasionally been questioned, and unsuccessful attempts have been made to overthrow the caste system. More frequent, however, has been the effort of lowly placed groups to raise their status as a group by Sanskritizing their ritual and belief.

Rites and beliefs have been constantly undergoing a process of Sanskritization. This is going on both inside and outside Hinduism. The rites and beliefs of the castes occupying the lower rungs

of the caste-ladder as well as the rites and beliefs of outlying 779
communities hidden away in the forest-clothed mountains of 182
India have been subjected to Sanskritization. The presence of 564
completely Sanskritized worship of rivers, trees, and mountains in Hinduism, and their incorporation in the vast mythology of Hinduism, make easier the assimilation of the ritual and beliefs of the lower castes and of communities remaining outside Hinduism.

Hinduism is not static. Like every living religion it has continually reacted to the political and social forces of the time, both influencing them and being influenced by them. In the last hundred years it has produced reformist movements like the Brahmo Samāj, Ayra Samāj, and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission. Mahātma Gāndhi himself in his fight against Untouchability and in the many other reforms he advocated provides us with an instance of the dynamic nature of Hinduism.

While the intellectual has all along concentrated on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gīta, and the Philosophical Systems, to the ordinary Hindu the innumerable feasts, fasts, *vratas* (rites and austerities performed to achieve certain ends), pilgrimages, and occasional visits to nearby temples constitute the stuff of religious life. The *purāṇas* (stories illustrating the works and powers of the gods), *itihāsas* (consisting of the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata), and stories about local saints and the songs sung by them, all have a conspicuous place in day-to-day living.

II

The concept of 'spread' has been used throughout this book: 779
Hinduism has been split up, for purposes of analysis, into 'All-India Hinduism', 'Peninsular Hinduism', 'Regional Hinduism', and finally purely 'Local Hinduism'. All-India Hinduism is Hinduism with an All-India spread, and this is chiefly Sanskritic in character. Peninsular Hinduism spreads over the entire peninsular part of India, while Regional Hinduism has a more restricted spread. A 'Region' has to be defined in every case, and in this book Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg Proper may be said to constitute a Region. Local Hinduism is Hinduism with its spread confined to Coorg Proper, or even a smaller area within it. In a very broad sense it is true that as the area of spread decreases, the number of ritual and cultural forms shared in common

779 increases. Conversely, as the area increases, the common forms decrease.

'Spread' might vary for different castes in the same village or town: Brahmins everywhere have much Sanskritic ritual in common, and this we call 'horizontal spread'. A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking, and the Brahmins in any linguistic area share some cultural and ritual forms with all the castes, including the lowest, in that area. This type of spread, common to all the castes in an area, has been termed 'vertical spread'.

It is essential to distinguish here between the possession of common ritual and cultural forms, and of common deities and other objects of worship. The latter is more directly productive of solidarity than the former. The possession of common cultural and ritual forms is also a factor making for solidarity, but not as directly as the possession of common deities. It is possible to imagine situations in which the strength of the latter bond might result in a denial of the former. Members of two different religions living in the same area sharing the same language and other cultural and ritual forms might be involved in a mutually destructive conflict.

779 All-India Hinduism, as mentioned earlier, is chiefly Sanskritic
177 and it spreads in two ways: by the extension of Sanskritic deities and ritual forms to an outlying group, as well as by the greater Sanskritization of the ritual and beliefs of groups inside Hinduism. Both these processes are at work, and the first results in Sanskritic deities assuming different forms in their travels all over India, while the second results in local deities assuming Sanskritic labels and forms. The Vēdic deity Kshētrapāla becomes Kētrappa in Coorg, while the local cobra-deity becomes identified with Subramaṇya, the warrior-son of Shiva.

All-India Hinduism possesses certain features which make easy the absorption of local elements. The worship of the river Ganges which is one of the features of Sanskritic Hinduism makes easy the absorption of river-worship in every part of India, including the worship of the River Kāvēri which rises in, and flows through, Coorg. The Kāvēri is sacred to Hindus all along its course from the source to the estuary. Temples are built along its course, and especially where other rivers join it, and on islands formed by the river. Bathing in rivers is productive of spiritual merit (*puṇya*) and

destructive of sin (*pāpa*). Bathing in the Kāvēri on certain days 779
such as the first of Libra and Shivarātri is specially productive of 177
puṇya.

The Kāvēri is called '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or 'southern Ganges', and 778
the Kāvēri myth (see Appendix) tells us that waters of the Ganges 788
and other sacred rivers and seas are present in the source of the 171
river on the first of Libra at the moment of the river's birth. The
faithful believe that there is an underground passage connecting
the source of the river with the Ganges at Benares. Pilgrims to the
Tala Kāvēri, like pilgrims to Benares, return with the water of the
sacred river in sealed copper pots. This water is used for ritual [783]
purification and drinking on certain days. Coorg pilgrims sprinkle
the holy water on members of their *okka*, and on the house,
granary, and cattle.

Offerings of balls of rice-flour are made to dead relatives on the 171
banks of the Kāvēri; and the ends of the garments of the husband 769
and wife are tied together while bathing in the river and in the 783
larger of the two springs of Tala Kāvēri. Both these concepts are
common to Hindus all over India.

The Kāvēri Myth, whose authorship appears to be Brahminical, 773
has the Ganges Myth for its model. As is well known, the Ganges 778
meets the Jumna at Allahabād, and to this, Hindu mythology adds 171
a third river, the Saraswati, which is said to flow underground and
join unseen the first two rivers. The confluence of the Ganges,
Jumna, and the mythical Saraswati is called '*trivēṇi sangama*' or
'union of three rivers'.

At Bhāgamanḍla, about three miles from the source of the Kāvēri, it meets the Kanakḗ. But to this the Kāvēri Myth adds a third river, the Sujyoti, which is said to flow underground and join the first two.

There is a myth about practically every river in India, and in every one of these myths some Sanskritic deities, and sages and characters from the epics and the *purāṇas*, take part. Each myth in time becomes a part of the vast corpus of Hindu mythology. Each myth makes sacred certain features of local geography by associating deities, and characters from the epics and *purāṇas*, with them. The myths abound in inconsistencies which, however, do not bother the bulk of the Hindus.

On certain occasions Coorg women are required to worship the 778
domestic well, and this is referred to as '*ganga pūja*'. A similar 171

778 custom exists everywhere in south India among Hindus. Water
171 is identified with the holy Ganges, and such an identification teaches a Hindu to regard the Ganges as a deity. It opens a window on Sanskritic Hinduism.

773 On the way to Tala Kāvēri from Bhāgamanḍla there is an
778 immense boulder called 'Bhīma's pebble'. It is said that Bhīma, one of the Pānḍava brothers, found a tiny 'pebble' in his dinner which he picked up and threw away. What was a tiny pebble to Bhīma is an immense boulder to ordinary human beings. Bhīma's strength was prodigious, and his strength, enormous appetite, and chivalry have made him the most lovable of the five Pānḍava brothers, the heroes of the epic, Mahābhārata. 'Bhīma's pebble' makes the epic more immediate to Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg.

The mountain in which the Kāvēri rises is called Brahmagiri, and it is said that the god Brahma has settled down on top of the mountain. Brahma was in two minds as to whether he should settle down on top of the Brahmagiri mountain or a neighbouring one, and he finally decided on the former as it was higher than the latter by a rice grain.

778 While ideally the Kāvēri is sacred to every Hindu, actually it is
788 mostly Hindus from various parts of south India, especially
171 Mysore, Malabar, and the Tamil country who go on pilgrimage to the river-source on the first of Libra. Similarly the shrine of Subramaṇya is sacred to every Hindu, though actually only Hindus from the Kannaḍa- and Tulu-speaking areas visit it. But there are centres of pilgrimage such as the Temple of Venkāṭāchala at Tirupati in the Telugu country visited by Hindus from practically every part of south India. The temples of Mīnākshi at Madura and Rāmēshwara at Rāmēshwaram in south-east India are visited by Hindu pilgrims from every part of India. In continental India, too, there are several places of pilgrimage for Hindus from every part of India.

776 Deities too have varying 'spreads' even though ideally they are
171 sacred to all Hindus. In fact, over a period of time 'spread' shows a dynamic quality: a deity who commanded the devotion of a king enlarged his 'spread' to include the territory ruled by the king.

171 Peninsular India is an area of enormous cultural diversity, but it forms a loose unity viewed in relation to continental India, just as India itself exhibits some unity when viewed in relation to the rest

of the world. Certain ritual and cultural forms are found widespread 171
over peninsular India: the *tāḷi* or marriage badge tied by the groom
to the bride is found everywhere except among Coorgs. A married [302]
woman wears a vermilion mark on her forehead, and only she is
entitled to a necklace of tiny black beads and black bangles and
to wear flowers in her hair. The cult of the village-deities too is [776]
broadly similar.[1]

Coorg Proper forms a 'Region' along with Malabar and South 101
Canara. The three areas mentioned have many similar rites, beliefs, 779
customs, and habits. But within this 'Region', Coorg Proper seems to have more in common with Malabar than with South Canara. The ritual forms which Coorg shares with Malabar and South Canara, and the deities worshipped by them, usually come under Regional Hinduism, while the ritual forms and deities shared in common with Kannaḍigas and Tamilians usually come under Peninsular Hinduism.

Local Hinduism has a more restricted 'spread' than Regional 779
Hinduism. The people of a village or *nāḍ* share a great many ritual 184
and cultural forms in common, though membership of a caste frequently cuts across these alinements in the case of the top and immigrant castes. Castes like the Baṇṇa, Paṇika, and Kaṇiya share certain ritual and cultural forms with not only their counterparts in Malabar but with all Malayāḷis. Similarly with castes like the Poleyas and Mēdas who are immigrants from the Kannaḍa country. The length of the period of residence of an immigrant caste, and its position in the caste system, are factors which influence the extent to which it has preserved its traditional culture.

The River Kāvēri is a manifestation of Pārvati, the wife of Shiva, 773
and the devout refer to it as Mother Kāvēri in certain contexts. 776
Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their patron goddess: the Kāvēri Myth associates the river specially with Coorgs. Coorg women [291]
pleat their saris at the back instead of in the front as in the rest of India, and this feature of their dress is attributed in the Myth to the force of the floods which pushed the pleats of the assembled Coorg women to the back. This happened when Pārvati first assumed the form of a river, and Coorgs, men and women, were waiting for their patron goddess to appear at Balmuri, a few miles from the source.

Regional Hinduism often contains some Sanskritic elements, in 779
which case it directly stresses Regional ties and, indirectly, All-India 171

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[1] [THROUGHOUT PENINSULAR INDIA -- ANALYST]

779 ties. The identification of Subramaṇya with cobras in Coorg, and
171 in the Tuḷu, Telugu, and Kannaḍa countries is a case in point. Subramaṇya or Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva, is a Sanskritic deity having an All-India spread. Cobras are reverenced throughout India by Hindus and their worship takes different forms in different parts of the country. But the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya is confined to certain areas in peninsular India, and such an identification marks them off from other areas. At the same time such an identification draws the Regional phenomenon into the All-India complex.

A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking. All the castes in such an area possess in common certain cultural and ritual forms. This type of 'spread' has been called 'vertical spread'.

The upper castes in every part of India have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common, and this has been called 'horizontal spread'. Thus a Brahmin in Coorg will have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common with a Brahmin in Kashmir.

Every caste in practically every linguistic area in India shares in both horizontal and vertical spreads. Generally speaking, the higher castes have more of the former than the lower, and the lower castes share more of the latter than the upper castes.

The systematic reconstruction of Indian history which has taken place in the last seventy years, the all-round improvement in communications, newspapers, radio, films, and books have all contributed to greater and greater Sanskritization of Hinduism. The various reformist movements in Hinduism, while conducting a propaganda for the removal of what they considered to be 'defects' in Hinduism, tended to stress the value of Sanskritic Hinduism. The greatness of Sanskrit literature and the vitality of Indian philosophical thought in Sanskrit have also contributed to the increasing importance of Sanskritic Hinduism.

III

564 The complete absorption of any group of people into the Hindu fold is indicated by their becoming a caste. The exact position which such a group occupies in the hierarchy might be a matter of dispute, but this is not important. Once the popular idea of caste as a rigid, five-fold hierarchy is given up and it is thought of as

consisting of innumerable groups, each of which has a certain 564 amount of cultural and ritual autonomy, then it is realized that any attempt to fit them into a hierarchy results in disputes as to relative status. When it is further remembered that the caste system includes sects which began originally by rejecting the idea of hierarchy, but which subsequently became castes, it is seen that disputes as to relative status are inevitable.

In south India disputes as to relative status are a feature specially of castes of the middle region. The Brahmins and Untouchables are known to belong to either extreme, though even here the presence of some subdivisions of Brahmins who are said to be inferior to practically every other caste complicates matters. The group claiming to be Kshatriya might be a local peasant or artisan caste which has acquired political power. Sometimes it might even be an outlying group or tribe. This gives rise to disputes. There are always people who point out that a particular ruling family which has been governing a certain part of India for several centuries are not Kshatriyas but belong to a low caste. Similarly the claims of local trading castes to be called Vaishyas are frequently questioned by others.

The fivefold system does not do justice to the complexity of the caste system as it exists, but it makes intelligible the castes of various parts of India by reference to an All-India framework.

Coorgs are a handsome, well-to-do, and powerful people with a martial tradition behind them, and it is quite natural for them to claim to be Kshatriyas. It may be recalled here that members of rich and influential Coorg *okkas* occasionally married relatives of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas. The Lingāyaṭs of the Kannaḍa country occupy a high position in the caste hierarchy, and they are also very strict vegetarians and teetotallers. The fact that relatives of the Rajās married Coorgs over 130 years ago is testimony to the high position of Coorgs in the caste hierarchy and to their physical and mental qualities.

The Kāvēri Myth makes out Coorgs to be Ugras, the offspring 564 of a Kshatriya prince and his Shūdra wife. Certain sins committed 723 by the prince in a previous existence prevented him from having children by a wife of his own caste, and he had to take a Shūdra wife for children to continue his line.

Why does the Kāvēri Myth make out Coorgs to be Ugras and not Kshatriyas? It is probably due to the fact that the Brahminical

584 authors of the Myth saw an inconsistency between Coorg dietary,
773 plus their failure to resort to Vēdic ritual on certain occasions of life, and their high economic position and the profession of arms. The last two factors favoured their being considered Kshatriyas, while the first two factors did not. The situation was resolved ingeniously by their being considered the descendants of an inter-caste marriage.

584 Educated Coorgs are, however, certain that they are Kshatriyas.
186 In 1902, Shri K. Appayya, a Coorg doctor in the employment of the Mysore Palace, wrote a book on Coorg customs in Kannaḍa, entitled *Koḍagara Kulāchārādi Tatvōjjivini*, and in this book he tried to derive every Coorg custom from the customs of the Vēdic Kshatriyas. This tendency is a common one: educated Coorgs regard themselves as Indo-Aryans, descendants of the original Indo-Aryan immigrants into India.

IV

773 Sanskritic Hinduism has a vast mythology. There are the *itihāsas*
779 which consist of the epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. There are
177 also the *purāṇas* which 'celebrate the powers and works of positive gods and represent a later and more extravagant form of Hinduism, of which they are in fact the Scriptures. The *purāṇas* are 18 in number, and in addition to these there are 18 *upa-purāṇas* or subordinate works .... None of them is devoted exclusively to one god, but Vishṇu and his incarnations fill the largest space.'[1]

The *purāṇas* are religious stories in which figure deities, and many semi-divine characters, and the public reading of the *purāṇas* and epics is even now popular. The *purāṇas* have played a great part in the spread of Hinduism as ordinary people became familiar with deities and ideas of Sanskritic Hinduism through them. Even more important is the fact that the *purāṇas* facilitated the absorption of local myths and legends. (The Kāvēri Myth is part of the Skānda Purāṇa.) The *purāṇas* have been continually expanding, absorbing local myths and legends, and also weaving myths round great historical figures and events. Another importance of the *purāṇas* is that they bring purely local myths into the main stream and thus charge them with All-India significance. Thus, through the *purāṇas*, a local community becomes acquainted with

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[1] J. Dowson, *Hindu Classical Dictionary*. Kegan Paul, 1914, pp. 255–7.

the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and 773
legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over 779
India. Thus the Kāvēri Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology 177
of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābārata, too, play an important 773
part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhīma's pebble' 177
near the source of Kāvēri has been mentioned earlier.[1] The Lakshmaṇatīrtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmaṇa, brother of the hero of the older epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmaṇa passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmaṇa, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmaṇa) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmaṇatīrtha and it joins the Kāvēri in Mysore State. Rāma established a *linga* (symbol of Shiva or Īshwara) at the spot where Lakshmaṇa tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēshwara temple (Īshwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēshwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shivārātri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with 773
characters and incidents in the epics and *purāṇas*. Such local myths 778
are found in every part of India: Rāma built a temple here, Sīta 177
bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himālayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other 773
Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. 784
Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and 177
characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Naḷa is told them as a warning: Naḷa one day left an unwashed spot on his

[1] [Cf. CAT, 116, p. 216 -- ANALYST]

78 ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Naḷa
784 lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became
177 deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Naḷa while the latter was standing under a *tānḍi* tree. Coorgs usually utter Naḷa's name when they have to pass under a *tānḍi* tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Naḷa, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

778 Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are
171
[262] opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected
779 the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about *karma* and *dharma* are widespread
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177 among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (*naraka*) and a good man to heaven (*swarga*). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (*mōksha*). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

V

776 Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb
177 local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make

clear what is meant. The deity Kētrappa of Bēngūr is identified 776
by knowledgeable Coorgs and others with the Vēdic deity Kshētra- 777
pāla (protector of the field). Whether there are any justifiable grounds for identifying Kētrappa and Kshētrapāla is a minor matter. What is of importance is that the two deities are so identified. Such an identification of a local deity with an All-India, Sanskritic deity, is very common.

In the Vēdas, Kshētrapāla is a deity presiding over every field, and he is invoked to grant cattle and horses, and to fill heaven and earth and plants and waters with sweetness. People pray to him for prosperity and wish to have him as a neighbour. An ox is sacrificed to him.[1]

In the course of 2,500 years Kshētrapāla has travelled to every part of India, and he has different attributes in different parts of the country. In Bengal he even changes his sex: he becomes Kshētrādēvi, or the 'goddess presiding over fields', and is regarded as a manifestation of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishṇu. As the goddess presiding over fields she ensures a good harvest.[2]

It is not necessary to give here an account of the transformations undergone by Kshētrapāla in the various parts of India. It is sufficient to note that in Coorg he loses all touch with the land. He is referred to as Kētrappa; '*appa*', which means 'father', being a common suffix to the names of gods all over south India, just as '*amma*' or 'mother' is a common suffix for goddesses. In Coorg, Kētrappa takes to a diet of 'blue-bubble toddy and crowing cocks'. People explain this by saying that he 'lost his caste' while travelling from Malabar to Coorg. The Brahmin priest of the Kaḍupālappa temple does not act as a priest to a deity who has 'lost his caste'.

Ayyappa is a Sanskritic deity who is very popular with Coorgs and it is clear that his character has changed in the process of becoming acceptable to his worshippers. In Sanskritic mythology he is Shasta, the son of Shiva and Mōhini (feminine form temporarily assumed by Vishṇu). Shasta is also referred to as Hariharaputra, or the son of Shiva and Vishṇu, and he is a very popular deity all along the Malabar coast.

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[1] Macdonnell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, vol. i, p. 211; *Vedic Mythology*, Macdonnell, p. 138; W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, vol. ii, p. 227. The absolute prohibition on the killing of a cow or ox is a post-Vēdic development.

[2] C. Chakravarti, 'The Saivite Deity Ksetrapala', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, vol. ix, 1933, p. 237.

776 In Coorg, Shasta is referred to as Ayyappa, or Sārtāvu, and he
177 inhabits the jungles in which he wanders at night with his favourite pack of dogs. At night, in the jungle, he can be heard whistling to his pack. Votive offerings of representations of dogs and bows and arrows are made to his shrines. Some jungles are reserved for Ayyappa exclusively, and nobody may hunt or cut down trees there. Coorgs do not hunt on Wednesdays and Saturdays because Ayyappa hunts on those days. Formerly, liquor and fowl were offered to him by Coorgs after a successful hunt. At some Ayyappa shrines non-vegetarian offerings are made, whereas at others only vegetarian offerings are made. Brahmins are usually priests at the latter shrines.

[224] Coorgs are fond of hunting, and every ancestral house has a pack
[551] of dogs which accompany their master during hunting. Ayyappa is extremely popular with Coorgs as the deity presiding over hunting, and very many Coorgs are named after him. His Sanskritic ancestry is not, however, recalled frequently.

Another Sanskritic deity who has undergone modification in the process of becoming acceptable to his devotees is Subramaṇya, who is, in Sanskritic mythology, Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva. But, as we have earlier mentioned, in Coorg and in the Tuḷu, Kannaḍa, and Telugu countries, Subramaṇya is identified with the cobra which is regarded by orthodox Hindus as a deity. Ant-hills inhabited by cobras are worshipped at Subramaṇya's festival.

177 The absorption of local cults, rites, and beliefs colours every-
779 where Sanskritic Hinduism, which varies, in certain particulars,
793 from one local area to another. The initial synthesis usually makes easier the later complete absorption of the local phenomenon in Sanskritic Hinduism.

In this connexion it is instructive to consider the attitude of the Brahmin, the representative of Sanskritic Hinduism, to the village-deities. His attitude is not something fixed and unalterable. It varies from region to region, village to village, and, frequently enough, from deity to deity in the same village, but when we consider a number of instances his varying attitudes fall into a pattern.

It was remarked earlier that the Brahmin priest of the Kaḍupālappa (Krishṇa as churning buttermilk) temple does not have any duties at the Kētrappa temple. But such complete non-co-operation

with a village-deity (we are not thinking of deities of the 177
Poleyas here) is comparatively rare. 779

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi shrine a Brahmin normally acts as 793
priest, and offerings of fruit and flowers are the rule except on one day in the year when animals are sacrificed outside the Bhadrakāḷi shrine, when the Brahmin priest has left, locking the door of the shrine after him. The Brahmin re-enters the temple next morning only after the front of the shrine has been thoroughly cleaned. He subsequently performs two purificatory rites in order to restore the temple to its normal ritual status.

The Brahmin priest is more co-operative at the festival of the Bhagavati temple at Arm̄ēri. In addition to performing certain ritual at the festival, he acts as oracle, a role usually reserved in Coorg for a member of a non-Brahmin caste.

The Rāmēshwara temple at Irpu and the Tala Kāvēri shrine are instances of almost complete Sanskritization. They are among the strongholds of Sanskritic Hinduism in Coorg and act as centres for its spread.

It is not always the Brahmin priest who is the agent of Sanskritic 779
Hinduism. In every part of the Kannaḍa country, and in Coorg, 795
the Lingāyaṭ sect, consisting exclusively of non-Brahmins, have 177
exercised in the past a Sanskritizing influence. Lingāyaṭ ritual is Sanskritic (though not Vēdic), and the Lingāyaṭ Rājas of Coorg have been responsible for the Sanskritization of the customs, manners, and rites of Coorgs. Customs like marking the forehead every morning with three stripes of sacred ashes (*vibhūti*), celebrating the festival of Shivarātri, and erecting tombstones, surmounted by the figure of the Nandi Bull, over the graves of important persons reveal Lingāyaṭ influence. Lingāyaṭism had its origin in the Kannaḍa country, and it was—and is—a predominantly Kannaḍa sect, and the Lingāyaṭs transmitted to Coorgs some purely Kannaḍa customs like Ugādi (lunar New Year).

As mentioned earlier, Lingāyaṭism made headway amongst Coorgs more easily because it was the religion of the rulers. Coorgs holding important posts in the service of the Rājas took over some of the customs and rites of their masters, and this had a chain reaction, which is natural in a highly stratified society.

The Brahmin too has been influenced by non-Sanskritic modes 793
of worship, and impressed with the power of the village-deities. 177
In south India it is common to find Brahmins making votive

793 offerings of flowers and fruit and, very rarely, through a non-
177 Brahmin friend, of an animal to the village-deities like Māri during an epidemic of smallpox or plague or cholera. It is wrong to assume, as some do, that in the contact between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Brahmins have always influenced non-Brahmins, while they themselves have remained uninfluenced.

VI

779 The presence, within Sanskritic Hinduism, of a vast and ever-
177 growing mythology, the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains,
564 and the association of deities and epic heroes with local spots everywhere in India, makes easy the absorption of non-Sanskritic
776 cults and deities. The caste hierarchy plays no small part in the spread of Sanskritization: not only do outlying communities signalize their entry into the Hindu fold by becoming a caste, but the existence of a sharply structured hierarchy which also permits groups to move up the social ladder acts as a powerful inducement for the lower castes to borrow the customs and habits of the topmost castes. The adoption of vegetarianism, teetotalism, and Sanskritization enables a low caste to rise in status in course of time.

The pantheistic bias in Hinduism also contributes to the Sanskritization of the deities and beliefs of low castes and outlying communities. The doctrine that everything in the universe is animated by God, and that all the various deities are only forms assumed by the same Brahma, makes the process of absorption easier. The village-deity who wants the sacrifice of animals and toddy is also one of the myriad manifestations of the formless Brahma whom the philosopher contemplates. The gods of the lower castes are not denied, but affirmed, and affirmed in such a way that their subsequent Sanskritization is rendered easier.

Another point that needs to be remembered is that the presence of Sanskritized local cults and village-deities in Hinduism makes easier the further absorption of local phenomena. Sanskritic Hinduism may be thought of as consisting of several layers, and the similarity of the lower layers to local cults and village-deities everywhere enables the latter to be absorbed. Once inside Sanskritic Hinduism the local rites and beliefs undergo Sanskritization rapidly
779 and in a thoroughgoing manner.

177 The spread of Sanskritization being a matter of spontaneous

The spread of Sanskritization being a matter of spontaneous
growth produces certain inconsistencies. For instance, the main 779
body of Coorgs propitiate their dead ancestors by offering meat 177
and liquor with the Baṇṇa acting as oracle, as well as by offering 182
balls of rice-flour under the guidance of a Brahmin priest. Amma Coorgs, a Sanskritized division of Coorgs, make the inconsistency in the customs of the main body of Coorgs all the more glaring by observing annual *shrāddhas* (propitiation of ancestors with balls of rice using Sanskrit *mantras*) after the manner of Brahmins, and by completely eschewing the other mode of propitiation.

Many village-deities who are made out to be forms of Mahādēva (or Shiva), and goddesses who are made out to be Povvedi (i.e. Bhagavati, wife of Shiva), are offered meat and toddy. Side by side with these deities, Coorgs offer worship at the temples of Tala Kāvēri, Rāmēshwara in Irpu, and Omkārēshwara in Mercara, where the priests are Brahmins and Sanskrit *mantras* are used, and where only offerings of fruit and flowers are permitted.

Inconsistencies are also seen on the plane of belief. It has been mentioned earlier that the Coorg funeral song says that the man died because the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa was finished; and the survivors pray God not to cause the dead man to be reborn as living is synonymous with suffering. These ideas are entirely consistent with Sanskritic theology. But at another place in the funeral song the mourner says, 'Nārāyaṇa's thieving horde (*kaḷḷa paḍē*) came to kill you. Had I known it, I would have hacked the horde to pieces.' This is entirely consistent with the martial idiom of Coorgs, but inconsistent with the ideas of Sanskritic theology mentioned earlier.

As a rule, educated Coorgs turn more and more to Sanskritic deities, rites, and beliefs. The Rāmakrishṇa Mission is active in Coorg, and in recent years it has been responsible for carrying the
message of philosophical Hinduism to Coorgs. In the last thirty [792]
years four Coorgs have become *sanyasis*, dedicating their lives to prayer and meditation and the active service of their fellow men. One of these *sanyasis* has a hermitage (*āshrama*) called appropriately *Kāvēri Āshrama.*

VIII

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

I

243 788 COORG is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their *okkas* living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg *okka*, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg *okka* directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

243 A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in [438] January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which [796] every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) participated. The festivals of the village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

423 778 784 The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head, while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not consistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.

The entire rice-field (*varga*) is cut up into a number of small 243
rectangular plots ridged up on all the four sides. Each plot (*tēva*) 788
is referred to by a distinct name, and one of these plots is regarded as the main plot and it has the same name as the entire rice-field. The traditional association between an *okka* and its ancestral [596]
estate is symbolized in the custom of burying the umbilical cord
of the eldest son of the head of the *okka* in the main plot of the [846]
ancestral estate. The eldest son is the one who is going to become the head of the *okka* in course of time, and as head of the *okka* he will have to look after the ancestral rice-field. The main plot stands for the entire rice-field, and it is entirely proper that the umbilical cord of the future head of the *okka* should be buried in the main plot. It may be recalled, in this connexion, that during the periodical ancestor-propitiation, the Baṇṇa oracle, possessed by an ancestor, may demand to be shown round the rice-field in order to see for himself whether it is looked after properly. Thus a Coorg continues [749]
to take an interest in the affairs of his *okka* even after his death, which means that he continues to care for the rice-field on which the prosperity and happiness of the *okka* and thus, indirectly, of the total society depends.

Every stage of the cultivation of the rice crop is marked by ritual. The main plot of the ancestral rice-field is ritually ploughed on the first of Aries, the beginning of the new year according to the solar calendar. Either the head of the *okka*, or a younger [787]
member who is considered to be specially suitable by the astro- [777]
loger, ritually ploughs the main plot during an auspicious period of time. Regular ploughing of the rice-fields commences only after the ritual ploughing on New Year's Day.

Paddy is sown in the nurseries at an auspicious period of time. When the plants are 10–12 inches high, they are transferred to the various plots in the rice-fields. The plucking of the young plants and their transplantation are both begun during auspicious periods. The transplantation of the young plants is a highly complicated task requiring the co-ordination of the work of a number of people. It is especially so if the estate is a big one.

The Kāvēri festival includes a rite called *bottu* (lit., fear) and this is intended to protect the growing crop, the woods on the estate, and the domestic well.

One of the most important calendar festivals of Coorgs is the *putri* (lit., new rice) when the paddy sheaves are ritually cut.

243 788 This latter rite is the crucial point of the festival which lasts nine to ten days, the seven days previous to the sheaf-cutting being spent in singing, dancing, and playing games. On the day following the cutting of sheaves there is a domestic feast, a dance, and sports for all the villagers. This is followed by a dance for the entire *nāḍ*, and a collective hunt and dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*).

243 787 The rite of cutting the sheaves takes place on the full-moon day in the month of Scorpio under either of the constellations, *krittikē* or *rōhiṇi*. Formerly the hereditary astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi in Nālknāḍ used to decide the day and time for the ritual cutting of sheaves for the whole of Coorg Proper excluding Kiggaṭnāḍ. The local astrologer then decided for each high caste *okka* in his village the member who was most suitable for performing the rite of cutting the sheaves. The member selected for this honour had to wear the white gown.

243 788 On the festival day, very early in the morning, various leaves and creepers are gathered for the rite of *nérē kaṭṭuvudu*. The trees and creepers most common locally are chosen for this purpose, and they frequently vary from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*. They seem to symbolize the principle of fertility in vegetable nature. A wish for growth is also indicated in another rite, and such a wish is commonly indicated in harvest festivals in south India.

A part of the kitchen floor is cleaned with a solution of cow dung and a new mat is spread on it. A tripod-stool is made to stand on the mat, and a dish-lamp is placed on the stool. A harvest-basket containing the leaves, and short lengths of creepers, is kept near the dish-lamp. Later, at an auspicious time, a leaf of each variety is taken, arranged one upon the other, a short length of *inyoḷi* creeper crowning the pile of leaves. The leaves are then rolled round the creeper and the roll is secured with a length of *achchi* fibre. A number of such rolls are made.

A harvest-basket is filled with paddy and this is placed on the mat near the dish-lamp. Two measures and a small pot, filled with paddy, rice, and rice-flour respectively, are arranged one upon the other on the paddy in the basket. The new bamboo vessel (*kutti*) which the Mēda brought in the morning is stood near the basket on the mat. A little milk, honey, and *ghī* are poured into the vessel. Bits of coconut, fresh ginger, and green rattan cane, and a small quantity of gingelly grains are also put into it. Finally, the new sickle which the blacksmith brought is left in it.

The members of the *okka* then eat a dish of cooked harvest yam 243
(*putri genasu*, which ripens at the time of the harvest festival) 788
mixed with honey and *ghī*.

At the auspicious time fixed by the astrologer, the sheaf-cutter leaves the house carrying the bamboo vessel in his hand. Before him goes a girl carrying a dish-lamp. A band marches farther ahead.

As soon as he reaches the rice-field, the sheaf-cutter salutes the sacred eastern direction and the field. He ties a leaf-roll to the bottom of a rice plant and pours a little of the contents of the bamboo vessel on it. Everyone shouts '*poli*, *poli*, *dēva*' (increase, increase, O god), and a shot is fired from a gun. The sheaf-cutter cuts a number of plants, taking care to see that each time he cuts an odd number.

After the party reaches home, the sheaf-cutter's feet are washed, and he is given milk to drink. He deposits the bamboo vessel in the kitchen.

He then prepares *yēḷakki puṭṭ* (seven rice-pudding), kneading together a quantity of rice-flour, a few plantains, some milk and honey, and seven of each of the following: new rice grains from the sheaves, gingelly grains, tiny stones, and bits of coconut, ginger, and green rattan cane. Small balls are made of this mixture and offered to the lamps in the south-western room and ancestor-shrine. Later everyone eats a little of the mixture.

Leaf-rolls (*néré*) and sheaves are tied to every part of the house. The sweet, liquid dish, *pāyasa*, is prepared and into this are put seven new rice grains.

The rites performed at the harvest festival stress, directly or indirectly, the great value of rice to Coorgs. The astrologer decides not only when the sheaves should be cut but who should be chosen for this important task. New articles are used for this ritual. Elaborate taboos surround the person of the sheaf-cutter, and solidarity rites, in which valuable articles like milk and honey are used, are performed towards the sheaves before cutting them.

Some of the rites performed, like tying plants and creepers locally prolific to every part of the house, and uttering a prayer for increase before cutting the sheaves, express a desire for plenty. The ritual eating of the new rice, and the eating of the yams and vegetables which ripen at this time, are another aspect of the harvest rites.

243 788 On New Year's Day a clod of ploughed earth is brought home and deposited in the granary. When a man sees paddy in the ear for the first time, he goes home, stands before the granary, and says, 'I saw paddy in the ear, I saw paddy in the ear, do not be startled, do not be astonished, O granary.' He tells the granary that there is going to be a bumper harvest, a harvest that will burst the granary. At the Kāvēri festival, pilgrims carry home a handful of rice from the granary (called '*akshaya pātra*', the mythical vessel of increase) in the Bhagaṇḍēshwara temple. This rice is put into the domestic granary to ensure a bumper harvest.

Rice is essential to the Coorg's survival, and formerly it was also the chief source of wealth. Its cultivation is the most important activity in which the *okka*, the nuclear unit of Coorg society, is engaged, and the axis round which revolve other activities. A long drought as well as excess of rain is likely to ruin the crop. Rain is a friend only if it comes when wanted and keeps away when not wanted. Proper rains in sufficient quantities mean a good crop, and abundance of rice means food, wealth, and the ability to make sacrifices to ancestors and festivals in honour of deities. It gives one the means with which one can get one's sons and daughters married, to keep one's servants, to give the feasts which have to be given, and to perform other obligations. It is because of its enormous social importance that rice, and everything associated with it in any way, receives ritual attention.

II

538 186 In Coorg folklore, Malabar is referred to as the 'land of ignorance' (*ajnāna bhūmi*), and this is presumably due to certain matrilineal castes living there. All the patrilineal peoples of south India seem to have regarded matriliny as a very odd custom. The people of the Kannaḍa and Tamil countries occasionally refer to Malabar as '*strī malayāḷa*', which means 'Malabar which is dominated by [723] women'. There are myths which try to account for the oddness of Malabar: according to a myth which is widespread over the whole of south India, the entire Malabar coast was created by Parashurāma, the great Brahmin enemy of Kshatriyas till he was finally defeated by the Kshatriya prince, Rāma, the hero of Rāmāyaṇa, and an *avatār* of Vishṇu. The folktale on p. 221, which gives an account of a solitary act of disobedience on the part of Laksh-

maṇa towards his eldest brother Rāma, testifies to the utter 538
strangeness of Malabar. It is so strange that people setting foot in 186
it behave in an unpredictable way. This is doubly proved by Lakshmaṇa's great act of contrition immediately on returning to Coorg.

In the folksongs, deities are frequently reported as having 538
migrated from Malabar or South Caṇara into Coorg. It is true that 776
the deities are created 'beyond the Seven Seas, on the shore of 186
the Milk Sea', but they subsequently migrate to a town on the west coast, whence they proceed inland, towards Coorg, to seek shelter. In the story of the two deities, Achchaiah (m.) and Akkavva (f.), brother and sister, at first wander all over Malabar seeking shelter. They are directed to Coorg by some deities whom they went to in their search for shelter, and as soon as they cross into Coorg, Akkavva tells Achchaiah, 'O elder brother, when people see us wandering about together they will think that we are husband and wife, and not brother and sister. Let us take an escort with us'. Achchaiah accepts his sister's advice and takes a Poleya servant. This incident raises the question, 'why did not Akkavva think of taking an escort before crossing over into Coorg'? It assumes that a person need not be particular about what he does in Malabar.

Educated Coorgs assert that Achchayya is a popular name for 776
Vishṇu, and Akkavva for Lakshmi. This makes out Achchaiah and Akkavva to be husband and wife, and not brother and sister—the precaution taken by Akkavva in the story was in vain! It is only one instance of Sanskritization producing an inconsistency. According to the general rule mentioned in the '*dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*', there is a 'Mādēva (Mahādēva or Shiva) for every *nāḍ* and Povvedi (Bhagavati) for every village'. This rule is interpreted in such a way by Coorgs that every male village-deity who is not said to be a form of Vishṇu is said to be a form of Mādēva, and every female village-deity who is not said to be a form of Lakshmi is said to be a form of Bhagavati, wife of Mādēva. After giving the popular name of a village-deity, Coorgs frequently take care to add that 'he is *really* Vishṇu (or Shiva)'.

The story of the seven deities is relevant here. Seven deities, 776
six brothers and a sister, wandered all over Malabar in search of 539
shelter. The first three deities, Kānyarāṭappa, Tirchembarappa, and Bendrukōlappa, found shelter in Malabar villages alone, while the remaining four went to Coorg in search of shelter. They crossed

776 the mountains separating Coorg from Malabar by following the
539 Pāḍitora Pass. The pass brought them to a mountain to the southwest of Nālknāḍ, and standing on top of the mountain they saw the whole of Coorg stretching before them. One of the four suggested that they should all shoot arrows from the mountain-top and find out which of them shot farthest. The arrows shot by the brothers fell in Ammangēri village while the sister's arrow fell in Pannangāla. The sister had beaten the brothers decisively.

The sister then asked the brothers, 'Will you eat without salt if I cook food without fire?' Calculating that it was impossible to cook food without fire, the brothers readily agreed to the sister's suggestion. The sister put some rice into a bamboo vessel containing milk and buried the vessel in sand which was very hot from the midday sun. By the time the brothers and sister had bathed and changed into ritually pure robes, the rice had been cooked in the boiling milk.

The sister served the insipid rice to the brothers who sat before the disagreeable food looking up and down. The brothers then took the rice in their hands and threw it up into the air saying, 'O younger sister, this is how hailstones fall during the monsoon.' The sister hit the brothers on their jaws with her ladle saying, 'O elder brothers, this is how lightning crashes in the monsoon.' The infuriated brothers got up from their meal at once, and washed their hands and mouths.

The brothers, beaten in the two contests with their sister, seem to have decided to take revenge by underhand means. I deliberately say 'seem to have', as in the version of the folksong I have secured there is no reference to any premeditated plan on their part. But their subsequent actions make such an inference necessary. There was another contest between the brothers and sister after the unsuccessful meal at the end of which the sister was tricked into putting back into her mouth betel stuff which she had taken out to show everyone. (For details see p. 104.) The brothers then told the sister that she had lost her caste because she had put back into her mouth something she had spat out. The sister was beside herself with grief: she beat her head, rolled on the floor, and wept bitterly. The eldest of the brothers then told her, 'Listen, younger sister, we did not deceive you, you are yourself responsible for your present plight. We are unable to help you. I advise you to settle down in Pannangāla village and become the deity of Poleyas, who will have

a festival in your honour every year on the first of Aries. They will 776
perform a dance, and offer you fowls. You possess them, and grant 539
children to the childless.' The sister was inconsolable, and said that she could not bear the smell of Poleyas. But the eldest brother was adamant, and the reluctant sister closed both her eyes and assuming the form of a crane flew away to Pannangāla. In the latter village she possessed the Poleya servant of the Kartanḍa *okka* who tried to catch the crane. This deity is now known as Pannangālatammé (*ammé* means 'mother').

The eldest of the three brothers settled down on a mountain near the Pāḍitora Pass, and he is known as Iggutappa. It is said that on the first of Aries, when the festival of Pannangālatammé is being observed, Iggutappa's hill is covered with clouds, and it rains a little on the hill. Iggutappa, it is said, is very sorry for his poor sister who was forced to become a deity of the Poleyas, and he sheds tears for her fate. (Iggutappa is identified by educated Coorgs with Subramaṇya.)

The elder of the two remaining brothers settled down in Pālūr and is known as Pālūrappa. He is identified with Vishṇu. The last of the brothers settled down in the southern frontier of Coorg in Tirnelli and he is known as Tirnelli Pemmayya. He guards the frontier from Māri, the goddess presiding over epidemic diseases, and from thieves. He, too, is identified with Vishṇu.

Certain features of this myth may be noted. (1) The deities 776
setting out from Malabar are related as brothers and sister. (2) 538
They have a sense of seniority, common to both Malabar and 177
Coorg. (3) As soon as the brothers and sister cross over into Coorg, conflict arises between them. The sister proves supreme, but the brothers manage to defeat her in the end by adopting unfair means. (4) The sister's defeat expresses itself in the caste idiom—a familiar idiom in Coorg folklore. (5) The transition from matrilineal Malabar to patrilineal Coorg results in the overthrow of the sister by the brothers. The brothers adopt unfair means to overthrow the sister, but having overthrown her, are not happy about her degradation. Iggutappa's mountain is covered with clouds which dissolve into rain on the first of Aries: the tears he sheds are not crocodile's tears, as the situation is essentially ambivalent. (6) Finally, the brothers all undergo Sanskritization. The eldest of them is identified with Subramaṇya, while the two younger brothers

776 are identified with Vishṇu. This is no doubt inconsistent, but
538 Sanskritization frequently produces inconsistencies.

177 Pannangālatammé is only one of several instances of deities
776 losing their caste. Kētrappa (m.) and Povvedi (f.) of Bēngūr lost
564 their caste too. The case of Povvedi of Bēngūr is interesting as her namesake in Balmāvṭi, a village three miles away, retains her caste, has a Brahmin priest, and accepts only offerings of fruit and flowers. The ubiquity of the caste idiom deserves notice: the deities of the lowest castes like Poleyas and Mēdas are not worshipped by the higher castes, and these deities bear the same relation to the deities of the higher castes which the lower castes themselves bear to the higher. The habits of some deities are occasionally explained by reference to the caste idiom. A deity who accepts animal-sacrifice and liquor has lost his original high caste; and sometimes such an explanation enables a Sanskritic deity to become the deity of castes which consume meat and liquor.

III

581 Marriage is a preferred condition among Coorgs, and a married
589 man has a higher ritual and social status than a bachelor. A bachelor's social personality is not regarded as fully developed.

In the case of women, however, the contrast is not so much between spinsters and married women as between the latter and
[292] widows. A widow wears only white clothes, and these clothes may not have a coloured border. The clothes and ornaments worn by a
[301] married woman may not be worn by a widow. Certain ornaments which are associated with a married woman, like black glass bangles, necklace of black glass beads, and rolls of palm leaves worn as ear-ornaments, have become symbols of the married state. As such they receive ritual respect.

587 It is usual for young Coorg widows to remarry, and a remarried widow has a higher social and ritual status than a widow who does not remarry, though she does not have the same status as a woman whose first and only husband is alive.

589 Coorgs do not differentiate between a married woman and widow
769 as thoroughly as, for instance, the Brahmins. Amongst the latter marriage and patriliny are bound up with certain theological ideas: a woman's husband is her god, and a son not only continues the lineage but releases his ancestors from a particular kind of hell

to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins 589
committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head 769
was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman [778]
is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her,
like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the
marriage badge (*tāli*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on
certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from
ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is 589
similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married 177
woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin.
But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. 581
Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of 842
ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour. 554

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also 554
skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician
who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits
were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly
preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is 181
martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken 177
over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg.
Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the [796]
possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into
every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very 181
significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the 796
most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of
sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish
for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and
singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental
elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main
elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very 181
arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men 796
and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. 411
The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at
this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which

181 he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break
796 in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his
411 gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

224 The Kaṇiya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspi-
778 cious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the
poyyakaṇé tree. He also decides when the village or *nāḍ* should
[787] have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

226 The branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport.
[538] An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central
411 hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandal-
782 wood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

224 After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons.[1] The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

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[857] [1] A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

Several competitions are held on the village green. The men 526
are asked to shoot at a target (*kuri*). A variant of this is shooting at a target while running (*ōṭu boḍi*). Three stout plantain stems are planted very close to each other and men are invited to cut through them with one stroke of the Coorg sword. Coorg youths struggle for the possession of a coconut (*téngé pōré*). There is a high-jump competition, and then there is a form of putting-the-shot: the competitors are required to throw a round stone backwards over their heads. He who throws it farthest wins.

All the adult males in every *okka* in the village or *nāḍ* have to 224
co-operate in the collective hunt that is held after the 'festival of arms'. Each *okka* takes its dogs to the hunt. Every *dog* gets a portion of the meat of the animal killed. Every man taking part in the hunt gets a share, and those who hit the game first and second get an extra share each. He who first hit the game is also entitled to the animal's head, while the one who was the first to touch the killed animal's tail is given one of the front legs in addition to his ordinary share.

A man who shoots at an animal must not only hit it, but must draw blood as well. Blood, in this context, is referred to as *nambigé*, which means evidence. Failure to draw blood is punished: thorns are drawn across the bare buttocks of the unfortunate hunter before the assembled members of the hunt.

It was mentioned earlier that a man who killed a panther was [555]
entitled to have *nari mangala* performed on the village green, whereas he who killed a tiger was entitled to have it done on the *nāḍ* green.

It was pointed out earlier that Ayyappa, the son of Vishṇu and [776]
Shiva, becomes the hunting god *par excellence* in Coorg, roaming
the forests at night, whistling to his pack of dogs. Vows are made [782]
to him before a hunt, and offerings of clay images of dogs and horses are made before his shrines in the jungle.

The general preference for the martial way of life expresses 181
itself in belief, ritual, and myth. For instance, the Sanskritic belief 539
that an eclipse is caused when the serpent Rāhu tries to devour the 821
sun or moon provides the basis for a characteristically Coorg story. A one-eyed cobra lived in an anthill and near by was a creeper which had put forth an enormous gourd in which lived a hare. A strong wind blew the gourd off the creeper, and it broke when it hit the ground, setting the hare free. The cobra went after the running hare,

181 trying to catch it. It chased the hare round the world. The moon
539 was watching the chase from above and he dropped a rope to help
824 the poor hare. The latter promptly climbed up the rope and settled down in the moon's lap. The cobra tries to catch its prey periodically, and whenever it does so, an eclipse occurs. When an eclipse is in progress Coorgs shout, 'O one-eyed Siddappa (cobra), set free, set free.' They shoot at the sky to make the cobra disgorge the hare.

181 The martial orientation of Coorg culture is not a recent pheno-
701 menon, nor does it seem to be in danger of dying out: in the last war over 1,300 Coorgs enlisted as soldiers, and the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General K. M. Cariappa, is a Coorg.

785 The *sanyasi*, the man who has renounced the world to pursue a life of prayer and contemplation, commands very great respect among Coorgs. He leads a celibate life, and in his case bachelordom does not constitute a drawback. The rules which apply to ordinary men do not apply to him. Preference for the *sanyasi* is found everywhere in India among Hindus.

APPENDIX

THE KĀVĒRI MYTH

I

THE myth woven round the River Kāvēri forms part of the Skānda
Purāṇa.[1] In 1864 the Kāvēri Myth, called *Kāvēri Māhātmya* or 'the 538
greatness of Kāvēri', was translated into Kannaḍa from the original
Sanskrit by one Śrīnivāsa Iyengār at the instance of an influential Coorg
official, Nanjappa, of the Biddanḍa *okka*. The Myth has also been translated into Koḍagi, presumably from the Kannaḍa translation of the
Sanskrit original.

The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* as it is found in the *Skānda Purāṇa* is an 538
extremely complicated story, containing many stories within it after the 177
manner of *purāṇic* tales. It is inconsistent in many places, but then a
purāṇa is intended for the faithful laity who have no disbelief to suspend.
Richter, exasperated by the inconsistencies of the *Kāvēri Māhātmya*,
has written,

> 'the extraordinary anachronism of Pārvati's blessing given to Chandravarma, the founder of the Coorg people, who is thereby rendered victorious over the Mlēchchas or Turks [Muslim invaders of India], who made their first appearance about 500 years ago, transgresses even the thoughtless audacity of a *purāṇa*; for the *purāṇa* belongs according to its own account to the age of the Rishis (or the sages) who were long extinct when the Turks appeared. The numerous passages, inculcating the duty of the valiant Coorgs, to offer to the Brahmins the honours and gifts due to them, have met with singularly bad success. The Coorgs, it would appear, never troubled themselves much about the contents and admonitions of the Kāvēri book, and though the translation of it was designed to make it accessible to them, it is so highly spiced with Sanskrit and Old Kannaḍa expressions, that few do understand it.'[2]

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[1] ' "The *Skānda Purāṇa* is that in which the six-faced deity (Skanda) has related the events of the Tatpurusha Kalpa, enlarged with many tales. . . . It is said to contain 81,800 stanzas . . . ." "It is uniformly agreed," says Wilson, "that the *Skānda Purāṇa*, in a collective form, has no existence; and the fragments, in the shape of Sanhitas, Khanḍas, and Māhātmyas, which are affirmed in various parts of India to be portions of the *Purāṇa*, present a much more formidable mass of stanzas than even the immense number of which it is said to consist." ' J. Dowson, *Hindu Classical Dictionary*, pp. 300–1.

[2] Op. cit., pp. 216–17.

538 Richter's understandable irritations and prejudices prevented him from
177 comprehending the true function of the *purāṇa*, which is to account for certain inconsistencies in the culture of Coorgs, and to 'place' them in the caste system. Also the weaving of a *purāṇa* round a local river or mountain represents only an initial step in the Sanskritization of the beliefs, customs, and rites of a people. It prepares the way for subsequent complete Sanskritization. Certain theological and moral ideas come initially with the *purāṇas*.

Richter is right in saying that few Coorgs could have understood a *purāṇa* written in a mixture of Sanskrit and literary Kannaḍa. He could not have foreseen that it would become a folksong several decades later.

538 The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* describes the story of the divine origin of the
778 river, enumerates the sacred bathing places along its course from source to estuary, and some of the temples on its banks. It deals with Coorg, the country in which the river has its origin, and Coorgs, who are its most distinctive, numerous, and important inhabitants. It gives the story of the origin of Coorgs.

539 Long ago, Kavēra Muni, a sage, retired to Brahmagiri (the present source of the River Kāvēri) mountain in order to meditate on Brahma, the Creator. Kavēra's devotion was so great that in the end four-headed Brahma appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Kavēra told Brahma that he wanted children. Brahma replied that Kavēra could not have any children of his own because of sins committed in a previous life, but as Kavēra had shown exceptional devotion, Brahma presented him with Lopāmudré, Brahma's adopted daughter, and a manifestation of Pārvati. The sage was pleased with the boon. Lopāmudré informed Kavēra that she regarded herself as his daughter, and that she wanted to become a holy river, a bathe in which would rid people of their sins.

The girl lived with her foster-parents, Kavēra and his wife, till they both died. Some time after their death she met a great sage Agastya,[1] who had gone to the Brahmagiri mountain in order to meditate on Shiva. Agastya fell in love with Kāvēri, as the foster-daughter of Kavēra was called, and asked her to marry him. She agreed on condition that she would leave him for good if she was ever left alone even for a little while.

One morning Agastya wanted to bathe in Kanaké, a river which rises in the Brahmagiri mountain, a mile from the source of the Kāvēri. He put his wife into a vessel and handed the vessel to his young Brahmin disciples for safe keeping during his absence. Kāvēri, annoyed at being left alone, made the boy carrying the vessel stumble and fall. The vessel 539 rolled on the ground and Kāvēri escaped from it and flowed away as a river. The disciples then stopped the river which promptly went underground. (The Kāvēri flows underground from the source till Bhāgamanḍla, where the Kanaké joins it.)

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[1] Agastya is a famous rishi, the son of the Vēdic gods Mitra and Varuṇa by Urvashi. He is said to have been born in a water-jar, and was very short of stature. He once drank up the oceans, and compelled the Vindhya mountains to prostrate themselves before him. Tradition accords him a great place in Tamil literature, and also credits him with the introduction of Sanskritic Hinduism and Sanskrit literature into the South. He is also associated with mountains.

Agastya returned from his bathe and learnt of what had happened in his absence. He ran after his wife who was swiftly flowing away as a river. He caught up with her and expressed his regret at having left her alone and begged her forgiveness. As a result of his entreaties, Kāvēri decided to split herself into two halves, one half flowing away as the River Kāvēri, and the other half becoming Lopāmudré, the wife of Agastya. Agastya then told the river-half the course it should take to the sea, and enumerated the centres of pilgrimage along the course.

II

Long ago a Brahmin sage named Suyajnya settled down on the Brahmagiri mountain and meditated upon Vishṇu with great devotion. His devotion was so great that Vishṇu appeared in person before him and asked him what he wanted. Suyajnya replied that he wanted children, and Vishṇu gave his own daughter Sujyoti to the sage. The deity asked the sage to take the girl to Kanaké, servant of Indra, living on top of the Agni Mountain, near the source of the Kāvēri. Suyajnya did as Vishṇu had instructed him, and took Sujyoti to Kanaké. The two girls decided to meditate together. They did so for several centuries, giving up food and water. At last Indra appeared before them, and he at once fell in love with Sujyoti. He married her.

Some time after marriage Sujyoti informed her friend Kanaké that she was dissatisfied with the life she was leading, and that she wanted to do good to mankind. She suggested to Kanaké that both of them should become rivers and join the Kāvēri. Kanaké fell in with Sujyoti's suggestion and the two flowed away as rivers. Indra became indignant when he saw that his wife had left him to become a river. He cursed her, 'You have become a river without my permission. May your waters dry up.' Sujyoti was so distraught with grief when she heard the curse that Indra felt sorry for her and modified his curse, 'You will flow without water till you join the Kāvēri at Bhāgamanḍla, and then in the company of Kāvēri and Kanaké join the sea.'

The Rivers Kāvēri and Kanaké meet at Bhagāmanḍla, and to these 538 two which actually meet there the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* adds a third, 177 Sujyoti, which is said to meet the two unseen. Apropos of this Richter writes, 'The story of the invisible river Sujyoti, joining the Kanaké and Kāvēri is a lame imitation of the northern tale, that Saraswati, a stream of great renown among the Brahmins, is not lost, as it seems, in the

538 177 desert sands, but joins the Jumna and Ganges at Prayāga (Allahabād).'[1] The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is an attempt to produce a southern parallel to the northern model. Here again is an instance of the way in which the Sanskritic idiom extends over the whole of India.

III

539 Another, and a very important, part of the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* brings the river Kāvēri, the country of its origin, and the most distinctive inhabitants of the country, Coorgs, all into relation with each other. A special and intimate bond is created between the three.

Siddhārta, the King of Matsyadēsha, had four sons, the youngest and most gifted of whom was Chandravarma. Some time after he had come of age Chandravarma left his father and went on a pilgrimage to various holy places in south India. In the course of his pilgrimage he went to the Brahmagiri mountain where he meditated on Pārvati, the wife of Shiva. When the goddess presented herself before Chandravarma and asked him what he wanted, he replied that he wanted a kingdom, a wife of Kshatriya caste who would bear him children, and a place in heaven after death. Pārvati told him that owing to sins committed in a previous life, he could not have children from a wife belonging to his own caste, but would have to be content with children from a Shūdra wife. The goddess herself presented him with a Shūdra bride, and told him that his wife would bear him eleven sons, who would be called *ugras*. They would be courageous and righteous, and respectful to Brahmins. They would be equal to Kshatriyas in every respect except one, viz., they would not be entitled to the performance of Vēdic ritual. They would be devoted to the worship of Shiva and Pārvati.[2] The goddess assured Chandravarma that she would be born in course of time as the River Kāvēri, and confer prosperity and other blessings on the children (Coorgs) of Chandravarma. She asked him to go forth and clear the land of Mlēchchas (Muslims). She gave him a victorious sword, a white horse quick as the wind, and an army to drive the Mlēchchas out of the country.

Chandravarma overcame the Mlēchchas and married a woman of his own caste according to Vēdic rites. The coronation ceremony was performed by Brahmins to whom he gave houses and lands. He invited other castes to settle down in Coorg, called Matsyadēsha after the country ruled by his father. He had eleven sons from his Shūdra wife, and Vēdic rites were performed for each of them on occasions like the conferment of name, performance of tonsure, and investment with the sacred thread.

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[1] Op. cit., p. 216.

[2] The *Shānda Purāṇa*, of which the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is only a part, has a Shaivite orientation. The River Kāvēri is identified with Lopāmudrē, a manifestation of Pārvati.

In this respect they were treated like Kshatriyas and other twice-born castes. 539

When they came of age, the eleven sons married the hundred daughters of the King of Vidharbadēsha, the eldest son Dēvakānta marrying twenty girls, the second son, sixteen, the third, twelve, and so on.

Chandravarma retired with his two wives to the Himālayas to meditate on Shiva and Pārvati. Before his departure he told his children that Pārvati would be reborn in Coorg as the River Kāvēri and that they would be happy as long as they continued to worship Shiva and Pārvati, and the Brahmins.

Each of the sons of Chandravarma had more than a hundred sons. They were all very strong men, with nails as sharp and powerful as the tusks of boars. With their nails they levelled the ground and tore up the forests, and generally reclaimed land.

> 'Then they settled themselves anew in the country, the face of which they had changed by the strength of their own arms. Around them they planted houses and families of Brahmins and other castes. Because this re-establishment of the country resembled the renowned deeds of the *varahāvatāra* (the boar-incarnation of Vishṇu),[1] the country of Chandravarma's sons was henceforth called Krōdadēsha, and its inhabitants 'Krōda people'. The word Krōda is said to have been changed and corrupted by degrees into Koḍagu, which is the present, and probably was the original name of the country.'[2]

Two days before the first of Libra, when the Kāvēri festival is celebrated annually, Pārvati appeared in a dream to Dēvakānta, the King [796] of Coorgs, and ordered him to assemble his people in a place called Balmuri, where she would meet them. Accordingly, all Coorgs assembled there to greet Pārvati in the form of a river. The river came rushing down the valley, and the violence of the flood pushed the frontal knots of the women's *saris* to their backs, and even now Coorg women push the frontal knot to the back in memory of their first bathe in the Kāvēri. Pārvati appeared in person before the assembled Coorgs, and told them to ask a boon of her. Coorgs asked for children, wealth, a kingdom for themselves, and a priest, and Kāvēri granted them everything they asked for.

It is clear from the brief summary of the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* given 538
above that it is Brahminical in origin. Brahmins are praised in it, 177
conferred wealth and other privileges, and Coorg kings are told that they should 'establish holy Brahmins' in their land.

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[1] A demon named Hiraṇyāksha dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea. Vishṇu assumed the form of a boar (*varāha*) and rescued the earth after slaying the demon at the end of a contest lasting a thousand years.

[2] Op. cit., p. 224. *Krōdha* means 'anger, wrath, and passion'.

538 778 The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* brings the River Kāvēri and its worship into the main stream of the *purāṇas* which have an All-India spread. It also makes Sanskritic deities and ideas familiar to the inhabitants of Coorg. A special and intimate relation is established between Coorg, Coorgs, and the river as a result of it. A distinctive feature of the dress of Coorg women is associated with the Kāvēri. Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their [551] patron goddess. At least one in ten girls is named Kāvēri.

773 The account of the origin of Coorgs in the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is an attempt to reconcile certain facts which are not easy to reconcile. While it is true that Coorgs are a wealthy and powerful group with a martial outlook, they do not perform certain Vedic rituals which are performed by Kshatriyas elsewhere in India, and their dietary includes domestic pork and liquor. The myth finds a way out of the difficulties by suggesting that they are Ugras, the descendants of a Kshatriya father and Shūdra mother.

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GLOSSARY

104 **Aimara.** One of several sacred benches in the outer veranda or central hall of a Coorg house.

Kāraṇavaṇḍa aimara. Literally it means 'ancestors' bench'. One of the benches in the outer veranda, or a portion of it, so called. It is regarded as more sacred than other benches in the veranda.

Aruva. Family friend. Traditional relationship of friendship, frequently mutual, between two *okkas*.

Bainé palm. *Caryota urens.* Palm from the spathe of which toddy is drawn by a Kudiya, or low-caste man, for the consumption of himself and others, including Coorgs.

Bhāraṇi. Offering of cooked meat, liquor, puffed rice, &c., to village-deity or ancestor-spirit.

Bhaṭṭi. Measure equal to eighty seers. A rice-field was taxed according to the number of *bhaṭṭis* it yielded annually.

Bira. Spirit of a man dying a violent death.

Nellakki boḷuk. Lamp burning in a niche in the western wall of the sacred central hall. Translated as 'wall-lamp' in the bock.

Taiḷyakki boḷuk. Lamp kept on a sheet of rice spread in a bell-metal dining-dish (*taḷi*).

Dīkshé uttuva. Ritual, usually performed a few weeks after the death of a person, which completely frees the first-grade mourners from mourning.

Jaggery. Crude brown sugar made from the juice of sugar-cane, or the saps of various palms, either in the form of square blocks or small round cakes.

Jagir. An assignment of the king's or government's share of the produce of a village or several villages to an individual for services rendered.

Jamma. Concession tenure under which Coorgs and certain others held land. A *jamma* landholder was formerly liable to be called up for military and other service by the state whenever necessary.

Jangama. Lingāyaṭ priest who wears ochre robes. Occasionally, a mendicant.

Jāti. Subcaste. One of the innumerable, tiny, endogamous, and occupational groups which constitute the effective units of the caste system. A *jāti* has only a regional application while *varṇa* has an All-India application.

Kaimaḍa. Ancestor-shrine near the ancestral house of a Coorg.

Kāraṇava. The apotheosized spirit of the dead ancestor of a Coorg *okka*.

Kāraṇava kola or **Kāraṇava téré.** The elaborate propitiation of the ancestors of a Coorg *okka*. Translated in the book as 'ancestor-propitiation'.

Kāraṇava taré. Raised platform round the trunk of a milk-yielding tree, in which stones representing ancestors are embedded. Translated in the book as 'ancestor-platform'.

Kāvukāra. One of several high-caste *okkas* having well-defined rights and duties at the festival of the local village-deity. Translated as 'festival-priest' in the book.

Kēkangaḷa. Portion of the ancestral estate where the dead members of the *okka* are buried. When it is decided to cremate a dead person, an adjoining portion of the estate, called *tūṭangaḷa*, is used.

Kinḍi. Bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side.

Kuḍupi. Hostility between two *okkas*. *Maradalé* is hostility between two villages or *nāḍs*.

Kupya. A gown, like a dressing-gown, worn by Coorgs on ritual occasions.

Lingāyaṭ. Non-Brahmin sectarian

caste devoted exclusively to the worship of Shiva and Pārvati in their various manifestations.

Māda. Ritual performed on twelfth or sixteenth day of death which frees all except first-grade mourners from ritual mourning.

Maḍi. Ritual purity.

Mailigé. Normal ritual status which is really a mild form of impurity.

Mandu. Cleared, open space in village or *nāḍ* for dancing, or holding meetings, &c.

Mangala. Auspicious ceremony performed on certain occasions in the life of an individual.

Mantra. Hymn, sacred text, mystical verse, incantation or spell.

Mūrta. The most important part of the ritual of *mangala*.

Nāḍ. Territorial unit consisting of several villages.

Okka. Patrilineal, and patrilocal joint family, the basic kin-group among Coorgs. It is also a co-residential, commensal and property-owning group.

Paṇa. Unit of money equal to two annas and eight pies. There are six *paṇas* in a rupee.

Pandal. Decorated shed or booth erected in front of the house at marriage or other occasion.

Makka parijé. Custom by which a man raises up seed for his wife's natal *okka*, in addition to his own.

Okka parijé. Custom by which a man lives with his wife and raises up seed exclusively for her natal *okka*.

Paṭṭṇi. Day of fast during the festival of a village-deity.

Pinḍa. Balls of rice or rice-flour, mixed with gingelly grains and other things offered to the spirit of a dead person or ancestor.

Polé. Ritual impurity of any sort.

Kuruḍu polé or Tinga polé. Pollution caused by menses.

Petta polé or Puruḍu. Pollution caused by birth.

Tinḍu polé. Pollution caused by a low-caste man coming too near.

Poleya. Untouchable caste.

Kail poḷud. Festival of arms.

Putri poḷud. Harvest-festival.

Pūja. Worship.

Ganga pūja. Worship of the sacred river Ganges. Water in any river, pond, or well is identified with the Ganges on certain ritual occasions.

Purāṇa. One of eighteen mythological works treating chiefly of cosmogony and divine genealogy.

Sammanda. Ritual conferring or withdrawing membership of an *okka*.

Seer. A grain measure of capacity or weight, varying in different parts of India. In the Kannaḍa country it is equal to the weight of twenty-four rupees or 0·6067 lb.

Takka. Headman.

Tappaḍaka. Ritual enumeration of the restrictions to be observed during a village-deity's festival.

Téré. Elaborate equipment, made principally of split bamboo, and coloured cloth of pith, worn by low-caste oracle at an ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, and at the festival of a village-deity.

Tīké. Extreme form of pollution from which mourners and the house in which they live suffer until the celebration of *Māda* ceremony.

Tiruvaḷkāra (m.), **Tiruvaḷkārchi** (f.). Oracle.

Ugra. A mixed caste, result of the marriage of a Kshatriya father and Shūdra mother.

Varṇa. Traditional scheme of classification of castes. According to this scheme there are four castes, three of which are 'twice-born', and the Untouchables are outside the pale of the caste system.

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[For information on the cult practices of the patrilineal extended family, or okka, see category 116, pp. 123-175.]

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[This entire source deals in a general way with the functional interrelationship between religion and social structure.]

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/Specific information on the duties of the Rajahs as heads of the Coorg state will be found in category 643./